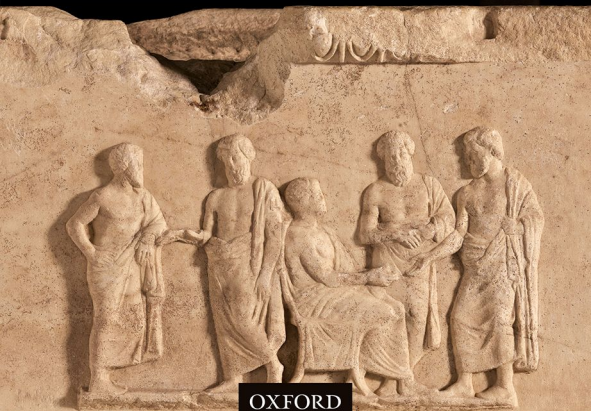


*Edited by Pieter d'Hoine & Marije Martijn*

# ALL FROM ONE

*A Guide to Proclus*



OXFORD

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Edited by

PIETER D'HOINE AND MARIJE MARTIJN

OXFORD  
UNIVERSITY PRESS

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## Preface

‘Which book should I read as a general introduction to Proclus?’ Until only a couple of years ago, this was an embarrassing question—despite having devoted several years of research to the great commentator, we barely knew what to answer. It was also a question that was being asked more and more often. It would hardly be an exaggeration to say that never in history have more people been studying Proclus and publishing on him than today. One need only glance at the bibliography to this volume to appreciate the vast range of subjects treated by Proclus and the variety of scholarly approaches applied to his work in contemporary research. Some of Proclus’ main works have only recently been published for the first time in critical editions or in English translations (for an overview of Proclus’ works and for recent editions and translations, see Appendix II to this volume) and the amount of scholarly work and in-depth studies on his oeuvre is ever increasing. Yet, in spite of this upsurge in Proclean studies and of the amount of high-quality scholarship at hand today, Proclus’ oeuvre remains difficult to access for students in classics and philosophy, or for scholars working in related areas of study. There is of course Dodds’ magnificent annotated edition of the *Elements of Theology* (1933; 2nd edn 1963), which has served many generations of scholars and students as an introduction to Proclus’ metaphysical system. But Proclus is more than a metaphysician and our knowledge of Proclus and of Neoplatonism in general has advanced considerably since the appearance of this masterpiece of scholarship. For the same reasons, Beierwaltes’ impressive *Proklos: Grundzüge seiner Metaphysik* (1965; 2nd edn 1979), a monument in Neoplatonic studies, cannot serve for a first encounter with Proclus. Rosán’s *The Philosophy of Proclus* (1949), which has greatly contributed to the revaluation of Proclus in twentieth-century scholarship, is in some respects rather idiosyncratic and in many others by now outdated. Other books, as for instance Siorvanes’ *Proclus: Neoplatonic Philosophy and Science* (1996), have a more narrow scope.

In short: there was no easy answer to this easy question. It was and is our conviction, however, that in this age of companions and introductions an accessible guide to Proclus’ thought and legacy was not only badly needed, but also truly deserved by the greatest pagan philosopher of the fifth century AD. Proclus is one of the most productive and influential commentators of antiquity, in speculative vigour he is second to none of his contemporaries, and the range of topics discussed in his oeuvre entitles him to a place in the canon of the great minds of the past.

And so our initial embarrassment gave way to a plan. We would gather a ‘dream team’ of Proclean scholars to discuss what an introduction to Proclus

would have to look like and then get them to write just that book. The timeliness of this plan shows from the fact that, since we conceived it, the situation just described has changed for the better. We now have a recommendable *Introduction to Proclus* (2012) by Radek Chlup, mainly focusing on Proclus' metaphysics, theology, and anthropology, and more recently Stephen Gersh has published his very welcome volume *Interpreting Proclus* (2014), which describes the history of more than a thousand years of Proclus reception in the pre-modern period. (Since most of the papers included in this volume were already at the stage of second or third drafts when the books by Chlup and Gersh appeared, they could be taken into consideration in this volume only in a limited way.) Our volume adds a third approach: our aim is to provide a general overview of the main aspects of Proclus' thought, including a number of subjects which would be difficult to include in a general introductory monograph, even though they represent some of the more salient aspects of Proclus' thought. Think, for example, of his mathematical, scientific, or literary views. We want to provide a picture of the 'whole Proclus'. Second and more importantly, with this volume, which is the product of a unique collaboration between a great number of specialists on Proclus, coming from different scholarly traditions and fields of study, we intend to provide the reader not only with in-depth studies on the different aspects of Proclus' philosophy, but also with a state of the art of Proclean studies today. We leave it to the reader to judge to what extent we have succeeded in these ambitions.

The chapters in this book attempt to present, insofar as possible, a complete picture of Proclus' life, thought, and legacy in a more or less systematic way. Yet each chapter can also be read on its own as an introduction to some particular aspect of Proclus' work or the different fields of inquiry in which he was active. By means of cross-references we have tried, as much as possible, to indicate where the different chapters of this book may complement or further elucidate one another. However, some overlap inevitably remains in the treatment of concepts or doctrines that are at the core of Proclus' thought and that therefore have relevance to various areas of his thinking. More importantly, we have not attempted to remove all divergences of opinion or emphasis in the treatment of Proclus' doctrines, as we consider offering a wide variety of at times diverging perspectives to be part and parcel of presenting any current state of affairs in Proclean studies. Apart from the table of contents, which presents the systematic order that we have envisaged for this volume, the indices and the two appendices may facilitate the navigation through and reading of the volume for those who are less steeped in Proclean thought. We trust that they could also be used, together with the general bibliography, as working tools for those who want to further explore Proclus' works. Throughout the volume, Greek terms and phrases in the running text have been transliterated, with the exception of direct quotations and longer phrases. In the endnotes, we have not transliterated the

Greek, with the exception of frequently occurring Greek terms and phrases such as *logos* and *doxa*.

In the course of preparing this volume, we organized a major conference on Proclus at the Royal Dutch Academy of Arts and Sciences (KNAW) in Amsterdam. The title of this conference, ‘Proclus—Expanding the Canon of Ancient Philosophy?’, expresses the hope of the editors of this volume. The conference was held on 1–4 February 2012, about one week before the 1600th anniversary of Proclus’ birth, when Amsterdam was covered with a carpet of snow. The first versions of all the chapters collected in this volume were presented and then commented on by two respondents, after which a discussion with all the participants followed. Apart from the contributors to this volume (of whom only Emilie Kutash could not make it to the conference), a great number of colleagues joined us in Amsterdam and commented on the texts that were presented. We warmly thank these additional respondents (Gwenaëlle Aubry, Frans de Haas, John Dillon, Orna Harari, Philippe Hoffmann, Alain Lernould, Gregory MacIsaac, Pauliina Remes, Fiorella Retucci, Jan van Ophuijsen, and Alessandro Linguiti—the latter had to cancel last minute due to heavy weather circumstances, but was so kind as to send us his written comments) as well as the other participants (Paolo Badalotti, Dylan Burns, David Butorac, Jan Egberts, Wouter Goris, Mareike Hauer, Robert Jack, Alberto Kobec, Olga Lizzini, Nicholas Marshall, Yoav Meyrav, Vasilis Politis, Arnis Ritups, André van der Braak, Maarten van Houte, Dimitrios Vasilakis, and Chris Vroomen) for engaging in the discussions. We also thank the Royal Dutch Academy for Arts and Sciences (KNAW), the Prof. dr. C. J. de Vogel Foundation, OIKOS, the Netherlands Organisation for Scientific Research (NWO, project 275-20-020), the De Wulf-Mansion Centre for Ancient, Medieval and Renaissance Philosophy, and the KU Leuven Research Fund for their financial support, and special thanks are due to Soek Yi Tong from the KNAW for her administrative and practical support in the organization of the conference. Last but not least, a special word of thanks goes to the people from Oxford University Press for having supported this project from early on and for the smooth collaboration in preparing this volume for the press. We especially thank our editors, Hilary O’Shea, Annie Rose, and Charlotte Loveridge, as well as all the people involved in the copy-editing, proofreading, and production processes.





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Photo: Marco Broesch © St. Nikolaus-Hospital, Bernkastel-Kues



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**Plate 1.1.** The so-called 'House of Proclus' from the south-west, August 1955

© Acropolis Museum, Athens



**Plate 1.2.** The piglet sacrifice *in situ*, 1955

Courtesy of the Acropolis Museum, Athens



**Plate 1.3.** The restored find of the sacrifice (Acropolis Museum, Athens, Gallery of the Slopes, Case 3, nos. 143–52)

Photo: Klaus-Valtin von Eickstedt © Acropolis Museum, Athens



**Plate 1.4.** Oil lamp with Eros

Photo: Klaus-Valtin von Eickstedt © Acropolis Museum, Athens



σιυ λεσμὸς ἔλθῃ δ' ἐπίκυκλος, καὶ ὅς ὁ ἐκκνητρός τέμνει τὴν  
 δίσκον μέσῳ, τὸν ἐκκνητρου, καὶ τὸν ζωδιακὸν γὰρ ἐνὶ ἐπιπέ-  
 δῳ γίνεσθαι, οἷον συμπυροσολύτους. τὸ δ' αὖ ἐπίκυκλον μετα-  
 σκάνει εἰς τὸ ἐτόρον ἡμικύκλιον, καὶ τὸν ἐκκνητρου ὑπὸ τὰ  
 ἐτόρα μέρη τοῦ ζωδιακοῦ τὸν ἀνεμου μεταλλάσσει. καὶ ὡς  
 μὲν ἀφροδίτης τὸ πρότερον ἡμικύκλιον τὸ τὰ ἀπόγυα ποδὶ  
 χον εἰς νότον μεθίσταται, τὸ δ' ἐτόρον, γὰρ ὡς τὰ πόριγεια εἰς  
 βορρᾶν συμμετάγῃ καὶ τὸν ἐπίκυκλον ποδιδόχου μὲν  
 τὸ πόριγιον, ἐκάτερον δ' ἐν τε τοῖς ἀργείοις καὶ τοῖς πόρι-  
 γείοις πρὸς βορρᾶν τὴν μέσων φαινόμενον. ὑπὸ ἧς ἑρμὸς τὸ ἐμ-  
 παλιν τὴν μὲν ἀργείον θέσιν εἶναι καὶ τὸ νότον πρὸς, τὴν δ'  
 μετὰ σπιν τὴν ἡμικυκλίαν γίνεσθαι τοῦ βορείου εἰς τὰ νότια, ἵνα  
 καὶ τὰ πόριγεια δ' ἐπίκυκλος διὼν νοτιώτερος φάνηται.  
 σπεφῇ δ' αὖ γῆνοι τὰ λεγόμενα ταῦτα τε καὶ ὅσα τούτοις ὁ-  
 μῶς συνάψουσιν οἱ ποδὶ τούτων γράφαντες ἐπ' αὐτῶν δια-  
 γραμμάτων. ἐστὶ γοῦν ὁ μὲν γὰρ ἐπὶ ἐπιπέδῳ τὴν δίσκον μέσῳ

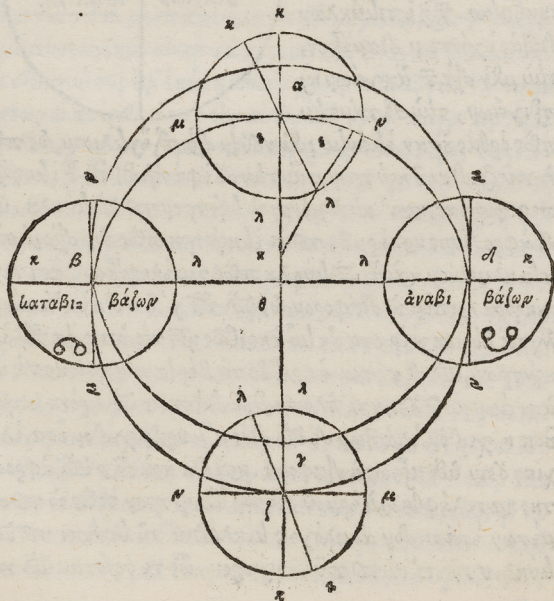


Plate 15.1. Page 64 of the *editio princeps* of Proclus' *Outline of Astronomical Hypotheses* by Simon Grynaeus (Basel, 1540), with a diagram of the motions of Venus and Mercury

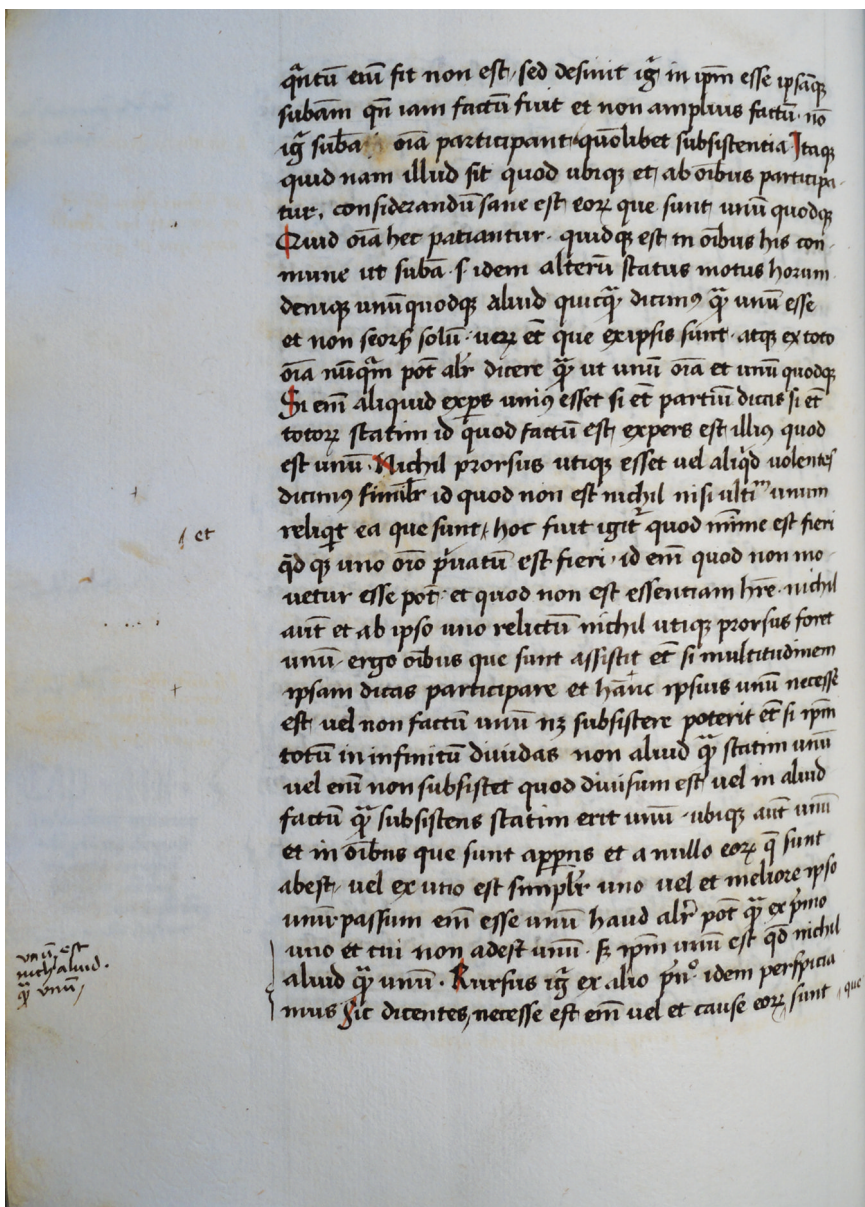


Plate 15.2. *Codex Cusanus* 185, fol. 57<sup>v</sup>, where Cusanus wrote 'unum est nihil aliud quam unum' in the margin of Proclus' *Platonic Theology*

Photo: Marco Broesch © St. Nikolaus-Hospital, Bernkastel-Kues

# Proclus of Athens

## A Life

*Christian Wildberg*

### 1.1. INTRODUCTION

Proclus of Athens, as he is often referred to, was not an Athenian. He became an Athenian in the course of his life—by the providential guidance of the gods, as he himself would have claimed. His birthplace was Constantinople; the year 412, not long before the distinguished philosopher and mathematician Hypatia, then at the height of her career, would be brutally murdered by Christian radicals in Alexandria (415). After childhood years in Lycia, a Byzantine province in south-west Asia Minor, Proclus spent some time in the tumultuous Egyptian metropolis of learning as a student of rhetoric and philosophy. But that cannot have lasted more than a few short years. He moved permanently to Athens around 430, still a very young man. There he died of old age in the year 485, after a life that spanned nearly the entire fifth century and was filled with fifty remarkable years of tireless teaching, writing, and administrative work in the ostentatiously pagan school of philosophy at Athens, the successor institution to Plato's Academy.

With the exception of Porphyry, Proclus was perhaps the most prolific and versatile philosophical writer of late antiquity. He left behind a massive oeuvre of commentaries on Plato, Aristotle, Porphyry, and Plotinus, systematic works on theology, theurgy, physics, mathematics, and astronomy, as well as a collection of hymns and epigrams. Under him, the study and interpretation of Plato, Aristotle, and the entire religious and scientific tradition of ancient Greece blossomed in Athens in a way comparable to the flourishing of Platonism in Rome in the days of Plotinus some two hundred years earlier. A towering figure in his own time, Proclus not only gave impetus and direction to the last generation of ancient Neoplatonic philosophers such as Ammonius, the son of Hermias, and Damascius, but also had an abiding

philosophical influence on numerous idealist philosophers, theologians, and scientists throughout the ages, ranging from Pseudo-Dionysius the Areopagite in the sixth century all the way to Hegel in the nineteenth.<sup>1</sup>

Two independent sources inform us about Proclus' life. First, we find a few valuable and suggestive remarks in the surviving fragments of Damascius' *Life of Isidore*, now often called Damascius' *Philosophical History*.<sup>2</sup> More importantly, tradition has preserved a biography titled *Proclus, or On Happiness* (Πρόκλος ἡ περὶ εὐδαιμονίας), a relatively short text best described as an exercise in pagan hagiography.<sup>3</sup> It was written by Proclus' colleague and successor as head of the Athenian school, Marinus of Neapolis (c.440–500).<sup>4</sup> The text lavishly ascribes to Proclus the kinds of personal qualities and deeds that one might expect from a pre-eminent sage of late antiquity: tireless study of authoritative texts, regular and frequent prayers and purifications, abstinence from every sort of unnecessary pleasure, rigorous self-denial, immunity to temptations of carnal knowledge, and, last not least, an intimate familiarity with the world of the gods.

For an introduction to the life of Proclus, Marinus' encomiastic obituary is an invaluable document. However, the present chapter does not wish to rehearse, once again, the well-known 'facts' of Proclus' life as they are described there. Rather, the aim is to revise the received portrait of the philosopher here and there and to draw attention to so far little noted patterns and details in the anecdotal material, details that, taken together, reveal the contours of a more complex historical figure. Even if it is impossible to lift the veil of Marinus' rhetoric entirely and to discern the man himself, it is not impossible to get a clearer sense of the human side of Proclus' life, the twists and turns of his startling pretensions and lofty ambitions. Given what we are told by our sources, we can gain some insight into the remarkable way in which he forged and fashioned his career and legacy. What did it take to become an influential pagan intellectual in the Roman Empire of the fifth century? How did one obtain and occupy, for nearly half a century, the most distinguished pulpit of pagan philosophy and avoid, in such contested times, anything like the fate of Hypatia? What did one have to do to survive as a pagan sage in the inimical environment of a by now well-established urban and imperial Christianity? What was Proclus like as a human being over and above the voice we encounter in his philosophical writings? In short: what did it take for Proclus to be and become—Proclus?

To be absolutely clear from the start, the biographical sketch offered here does not wish to be perceived as a kind of *damnatio*. Composing such a thing in the case of Proclus would be both unfair and unkind. I do submit, however, that a judicious assessment of the evidence allows a more complex, more human, and perhaps even flawed figure to emerge. By highlighting some neglected aspects of the story of his life, it is also possible to shed further light on the broader culture of late antiquity, a world that is both so similar to



and so remarkably different from our own. It was a culture that required individuals fiercely to compete with one another as they vied for worldly and spiritual power, a culture that had no qualms about displaying social rank with unabashed ostentation, and a culture in which considered beliefs and opinions could swiftly turn into life-threatening liabilities.

It was also a world in which the expression of one's identity had become more important than ever before. Pagan culture was under siege, and the old deities began to acknowledge defeat. To be sure, the Greco-Roman elite was still acutely aware of the abundant wealth of its once vibrant tradition; but it felt at the same time the intense pressure to embrace a worldview that was radically new, suffused as it was with the momentous belief that the divine had resolved to reconnect with humanity more urgently and directly than ever before, confronting each individual with the harsh alternative of eternal life or everlasting damnation.

## 1.2. A NOTE ON MARINUS

It must have been difficult for non-Christians of the time not to be vexed and provoked by the eschatological rhetoric that surrounded them on all sides. In this regard, it is perhaps unsurprising, for example, that Marinus saw it as his challenge to put Proclus on a pedestal of exceptional spirituality: a human so blessed with divine favour and benevolence that the mere narrative of his life could serve as a paradigm of human *eudaimonia*. Proclus too was a holy man.<sup>5</sup> Instead of following the development of Proclus' life in neat chronological order, Marinus chose to organize the biography systematically, applying the late Neoplatonic schema of the degrees of virtues to his narrative.<sup>6</sup> According to this doctrine, human excellence can be achieved in stages, each of which requires distinct moral and philosophical efforts. The natural physical and moral advantages a person might have are harnessed to develop, first, into ordinary social virtues, then into kathartic virtues (through which the soul increasingly detaches itself from a concern with the body), and finally into intellectual and theurgic virtues. These latter sets of virtues were to enable the sage to place himself in a position of communion with the gods. By applying the overall structure of Neoplatonic ethical theory to Proclus' biography, Marinus thought he could most effectively demonstrate that his predecessor, pre-eminently virtuous in each and every of these ways, had achieved the pinnacle of human happiness. The conclusion to be drawn, by the broader elite audience of the time, was no doubt that Proclus was a man as holy and hallowed as any Christian saint. On one level, therefore, Marinus' text is a delicate and covert anti-Christian polemic.



But there is more to this. Further literary scrutiny reveals that Marinus' biography of Proclus is not without its own surprises and idiosyncrasies. In a manner of speaking, the work itself stands in need of explanation. When we look at Marinus' text as more than just 'a source of information about Proclus with a point' and instead take it seriously as a piece of literature in its own right—as a carefully worded obituary, apparently written with some reluctance by an unassuming mathematician—other and less familiar aspects and motifs of Proclus' life emerge that complicate the apparently straightforward hagiography.

One such episode that gives the reader pause is the very beginning of the *Vita Procli* (henceforth *V. Proc.*). Before he sets out to talk about Proclus at all, Marinus has a few remarks to make about himself and the difficult task before him. He speaks with self-deprecating irony about his burdensome obligation, his reluctance and hesitation, and his lack of ability to rise to the occasion. If Marinus is merely harnessing rhetorical *topoi* to his cart, he is on the verge of overdoing it. It is instructive to quote the beginning of the biography in full:

If I had just considered the greatness of the soul of our philosopher Proclus or his merit in other respects, and if I had considered the level of preparation and rhetorical prowess of those obliged to write a biography of a man like this and had in addition to that been aware of my own inadequacy with words, I should have thought it just as well to keep silent, not 'jump over the trenches',<sup>7</sup> as the saying goes, and fend off such danger that arises from speaking up.

But as it is, I do not assess myself in this way but instead keep in mind that in the temples not all who approach the altars present offerings of the same value; some seek to show themselves worthy of communion with the gods in question by offering bulls or goats and other animals in addition to rather fine hymns, be they in verse or prose, while others, since they have none of these to offer, only present a cake, a grain of incense perhaps, and make a short invocation, and these are not less favourably heard than the former.

Keeping this in mind and fearing also 'to sin against the gods' (or in this case against a wise man) 'in exchange for honour among men', as Ibycus put it somewhere<sup>8</sup>—for I am afraid that it wouldn't be pious at all if I as the only colleague remain silent and not narrate to the best of my ability what Proclus was truly like, given that my obligation to talk is perhaps even greater than that of others; but perhaps I will not gain honour among men after all since they probably will not believe for a moment that I am avoiding the task in hand because I am mindful of its audacity, and not out of mental lethargy or some even worse affliction of the soul—for all those reasons I have decided to apply myself fully to the task of writing down some of this philosopher's myriad successes in his life and, in general, some of the stories about him that are true. (*V. Proc.* § 1; my tr.)

To be sure, there are different ways to begin an obituary, but one mistake to avoid is to draw attention to oneself, the living author, instead of the deceased

person.<sup>9</sup> So why do we get this stilted, elaborate, and increasingly convoluted *captatio benevolentiae*? Why does Marinus not simply state that it is his privilege and honour to commemorate his distinguished predecessor? Or just begin to speak about Proclus without further ado, as Porphyry did when he wrote his biography of Plotinus? Clearly, Marinus is outside his comfort zone and under considerable pressure, not so much because he does not know what to say (there is obviously plenty to say about Proclus), but because he is afraid of some sort of failure. As a matter of fact, the damage is already done: Marinus has put the task off far too long, for at least a year, if not more,<sup>10</sup> and others have begun circulating memoirs about Proclus' life,<sup>11</sup> while Proclus' very successor, whose first obligation it was to give the great man a fitting *Nachruf*, has remained strangely silent.<sup>12</sup>

It is not difficult to form a hypothesis about the reason for Marinus' procrastination. It looks as if some among his intended audience held the opinion that Marinus was quite generally not up to the demands of his office. Presumably, these were people like Isidore of Alexandria, a young and much admired student of the ageing Proclus,<sup>13</sup> as well as like-minded friends within the Academy who exerted a certain amount of not so subtle and pernicious pressure. Damascius repeats a commonplace when he intones that 'judging from his discourses and his writings (which are few anyway), Marinus clearly did not reap the deep furrow of ideas from which shoots forth the wise contemplation of the true nature of beings'.<sup>14</sup> Years later, when Marinus showed his *Commentary on the Philebus* to the visiting Isidore, the latter had to do little more than raise a disapproving eyebrow to prompt Marinus to commit his efforts to the flames.<sup>15</sup>

Marinus' lack of self-confidence becomes almost palpable when we read that he disarmingly acknowledges the poor opinion his peers might have of him. Putting up a defence of sorts, he insists that he has not hesitated for such a long time because he is lazy or suffering from an 'even worse affliction of the soul' (i.e. stupidity); no, it is the enormity of the task that kept him awake at night! As he is writing Proclus' biography, he is clearly concerned about the reaction among his peers and, by implication, his reputation within the Academy. Not all is well in the city of Athens. At his death, which occurred on 17 April 485, Proclus may have bequeathed to his successor a school that was in some respects divisive and disharmonious, possibly more so than the institution he had joined over a generation earlier.<sup>16</sup>

Does this background radiation of discordant energy already tell us something about Proclus and his possibly polarizing influence on the members of the school? It is impossible to answer that question with any confidence at this point. Let us instead turn to the main topic of this chapter: who was Proclus, and what did it take to become a pagan sage in late antiquity?

## 1.3. BIRTH, FAMILY, AND CHILDHOOD

The first event that had to occur is the seemingly trivial birth of a human being. In late antiquity, however, being born was no trivial matter at all. According to widespread belief, a soul had to stand at the ready in heaven, desiring to animate a particular piece of matter that was not yet a separate individual.<sup>17</sup> That soul would approach the sublunary world from a point on the eastern horizon and descend through the celestial spheres at the precise moment at parturition. All this might happen as a consequence of one of two different scenarios. The first is that some particular soul had become distracted from its sublime routine of contemplating the intelligible world and had begun to gaze at the material world and saw itself, as Plotinus once put it in a powerful and suggestive image, 'in the mirror of Dionysus' (*Enn.* IV 3 [27] 9ff.). And so, lured by the delightful prospect of becoming the exegete and successor of Plato, a soul may have leapt down from above in a spontaneous act of audacity to become—Proclus. This is one scenario. Alternatively, a soul could be sent into the sublunary world by the gods themselves, to become a beacon of light and spiritual guidance for the rest of humanity. Pythagoras and Socrates were such messengers from the gods, and, as we shall see, there is good evidence that Proclus believed just this sort of thing about himself, and his affiliates about him.<sup>18</sup>

The—in either case—cosmic event of Proclus' birth took place on 7 or 8 February 412, in Constantinople, the political centre of the civilized world.<sup>19</sup> We can be fairly certain of this date because, around that time, somebody was charged to produce the horoscope of the newborn Proclus, and because, remarkably, Proclus himself took the trouble to keep the record of what the heavens looked like at the moment he was born, preserving for posterity the auspicious constellation of the planets. Marinus seized the opportunity to make this document an integral part of the biographical *mythos*; more than that, he places it as a climactic crescendo near the end of his account:

But so that the more erudite may be able to conjecture, from the configuration of stars under which he was born, that the choice dispensed to him did not fall amongst the last, nor even among any in the middle, but among the first, I have set out their positions as they were at his birth. (*V. Proc.* § 35; tr. Edwards)

Somewhere up in the heavens, where the seven planets had taken up their various positions, Proclus' life began as a not yet embodied soul. Several aspects about the horoscope are remarkable, and we will come back to them momentarily. For now, it is necessary to retrace the early steps of young Proclus on his way to fame and fortune, happiness and salvation.

His parents, Patricius and Marcella, came from Xanthus, a not insignificant town in the province of Lycia in south-west Asia Minor; they were, according to Marinus (*V. Proc.* § 6), of distinguished social rank. And also virtuous.

When the boy was born, his father, a lawyer, was residing in the empire's capital on some legal or administrative business (*V. Proc.* § 8), but this arrangement was only temporary. Whether or not life at the centre of power was to the family's liking, it seems that the parents' minds were set on returning where they came from. Soon after the birth of their son, the family moved back to Lycia (*V. Proc.* § 6), and it has been suggested that this relocation to the province was 'a disadvantageous move for a lawyer that may be associated with the anti-Hellene activities associated with Pulcheria's rise in 414: Hypatia's murder, the edict of excluding pagans from imperial service and the army, and perhaps the trial of Hierocles'.<sup>20</sup> It is not necessary, however, to make the assumption that imperial politics or distant events in Alexandria prompted the move. There are three significant details that suggest that the family harboured strong sentiments of regional identity that tied them to the distant province: Proclus' name, the epitaph he wrote for himself (quoted by Marinus at the end of his biography), and the already mentioned horoscope.

First the name: well over two years before Pulcheria's rise to power as regent for the still minor Theodosius II, the parents gave their son the name 'Proklos', the Greek variant of the Latin 'Proculus'. The name betrays the unwelcome fact that the baby was born *procul a patria*, away from home.<sup>21</sup> One would not give a child such a name if one thought one had emigrated and relocated for good, or aspired to do so.

Second, Proclus' epitaph begins with an emphatic *Πρόκλος ἐγὼ γενόμενῃ Λύκιος γένος*, and we can glean from this piece of verse that inherited connectedness to the fatherland, at least nominally, remained an important part of his self-presentation: even though he had spent nearly six decades abroad, Proclus was from Lycia, not because he was born there, but because that is where his family came from and where he spent the first fifteen or sixteen years of his life.<sup>22</sup>

Finally, there is a third detail that underlines the importance of geography and rootedness in locality for Proclus' family. This takes us back to the horoscope. According to Marinus' text, the position of the planets was the following:

The Sun was in Aries, at 16° 26'  
 The Moon was in Gemini, at 17° 29'  
 Saturn in Taurus, at 24° 23'  
 Jupiter in Taurus, at 24° 41'  
 Mars in Sagittarius, at 29° 50'  
 Venus in Pisces, at 23°  
 Mercury in Aquarius, at 4° 42'

Several experts have struggled with the data, and it turns out that the reported longitudes, especially of the sun and moon, have to be changed for the

horoscope to make any astronomical sense at all.<sup>23</sup> What all historians of astronomy agree upon, however, is that the horoscope was cast for the latitude of Rhodes, not Constantinople or Alexandria.<sup>24</sup> As it happens, the latitude of Rhodes is exactly the same as the latitude of Xanthus. This detail suggests *not* that the horoscope was cobbled together after Proclus' death by some incompetent affiliate of the Neoplatonic School in Athens, but rather that it was cast by a local astrologer in Xanthus, most probably not long after the birth of Proclus once his parents had returned.<sup>25</sup> This scenario would go a long way to explaining the inaccuracies in the recorded positions. Thus, with name and horoscope, the parents apparently both acknowledged *and* doctored the fact that their son was born outside Lycia. If this is true, the manipulation of Proclus' actual birthplace in favour of Lycia might have been a rather audacious act of astrological tampering.

The horoscope must have looked auspicious enough to them, and later on to Proclus himself, so much so that Proclus kept it with him for the rest of his life; which is how it fell into the hands of Marinus, who says that any expert astrologer could easily discern its exceptional character and rank. The non-expert may confine himself to pointing out a quasi-conjunction of the Moon, Saturn, and Jupiter in Gemini/Taurus, with Mars in opposition in Sagittarius.

#### 1.4. ALEXANDRIA: EARLY EDUCATION IN GRAMMAR AND PHILOSOPHY

Any horoscope is only as good as the life it inaugurates. And so, young Proclus needed a thorough education, or at least something better than what was available in Xanthus. Proclus could not have been more than 15 or 16 when he enrolled in the rhetorical schools of Alexandria, where he was taught by the sophist Leonas, the grammarian Orion, and at least one other unnamed teacher of Latin. This training must have gone on for a couple of years or so. When Leonas, who was well connected to the powers that be, visited Constantinople, he made the adolescent student his travel companion. In the capital, so the story goes, Proclus had a significant dream (one of many significant ones, as it would turn out) in which a goddess (we are not told which one, but it was almost certainly Athena) exhorted him to do two things: first, to pursue philosophy, and second, to do so in Athens (*V. Proc.* § 9; cf. *V. Proc.* § 6).<sup>26</sup>

Surprisingly, at the time Proclus acted only on the first of these injunctions (philosophy), not the second (Athens). Returning to Alexandria, he dropped rhetoric and enrolled in the classes of Hero, a mathematician, and Olympiodorus, an Aristotelian philosopher not to be confused with the 6th-century Alexandrian commentator. Once again, student-teacher relationships turned

out to be remarkably intimate: Proclus moved into Hero's household, and Olympiodorus desired the bright young man as a match for his daughter (V. *Proc.* § 9).

Two aspects are noteworthy about the story as told by Marinus. First, there are the unusually familiar relationships Proclus seemed to enjoy with his Alexandrian teachers of rhetoric and philosophy. A human relationship consists of two people, and although teachers in their vanity often crave a following among their students, not every student is comfortable with a darling status and the inevitable elimination of distance that comes with it, intellectual and otherwise. Plotinus, for that matter, shopped around without becoming anybody's favourite until he had found what he wanted in Ammonius. Proclus apparently both sought and received tutelage in the form of lavish, undivided attention.

The second remarkable aspect is the apparent fact that, even when Proclus was still very young, crucial decisions in his life were influenced and informed by his dreams. Or were they? Obviously, divine visitations are a literary *topos* from the earliest times, and we have no way of determining whether or not any of the numerous dreams Proclus reportedly had were actual dream experiences or rather anecdotes and stories that took on a life of their own to become ever more numinous and portentous revelations. Either way, it is important to note that dream experiences were an integral part of the hagiographic rhetoric of Proclus' life (and by *life* I mean both his actual life and the account Marinus gives of it). It is unclear whether Proclus was simply instantiating a trend or setting it: Damascius reports that the younger Isidore, who so much admired Proclus, was also blessed with an abundance of prophetic dreams.<sup>27</sup>

Now, it may not be too audacious to suggest that Proclus' dream rhetoric, i.e. the fact that he disclosed the content of his dreams to justify his actions, could be somehow related to the first mentioned feature of his early years in Alexandria, patronage. Teaching is the art of making oneself superfluous, and one day it must have occurred to Proclus too that the professors in Alexandria had nothing further to teach him. But when you think the time has come to move on, how do you emancipate yourself from teachers who treat you like their own son? And how do you do so without giving offence? Claiming obedience to divine dispensation, far beyond one's control, might have been a clean way to handle an otherwise delicate situation. The dream in Constantinople calling him to the study of philosophy in Athens helped Proclus first to justify his dropping the courses in rhetoric in favour of philosophy without alienating Leonas, and it allowed him to press the same dream into service a few semesters later when the time had come to extricate himself from the presumably stale intellectual world of Hero and Olympiodorus. Proclus conveniently remembered its second part, and off he went to Athens in 430, no more than 18 years old.

## 1.5. ATHENS: THE EARLY YEARS

In Athens, the young man quickly became the pupil of the octogenarian Plutarch of Athens (c.350–432), albeit only for a couple of years, until Plutarch's death. He was then taught for another five years by the great Syrianus, until he too passed away in 437. Syrianus had admitted Proclus into his own household (*V. Proc.* § 12) and even tried to arrange Proclus' marriage to a young woman in Syrianus' family by the name of Aedesia:<sup>28</sup> evidently, the smooth pattern of cultivated patronage, intellectual and otherwise, that worked so well in Alexandria continued seamlessly in Athens. And so did the string of auspicious omens and dreams. I do not need to rehearse the well-known anecdote of Proclus' first drink on Attic soil from a spring sacred to the genius of Socrates (*V. Proc.* § 10). Nor, indeed, need I mention the Academy's porter's portentous words upon Proclus' arrival just at the time when the gates were to be closed for the evening: 'Verily, if you hadn't come, I would have locked up' (*V. Proc.* § 10). But it may be worth pointing out that, as far as the marriage to young Aedesia was concerned, a divine dream apparition unfortunately prevented Proclus from tying the knot.<sup>29</sup>

Another anecdote deserves closer attention, however. This is the memorable episode when the newly arrived Proclus made a lasting impression on the Athenian faculty by kicking off his shoes and openly venerating the crescent moon at the fall of dusk. One of the professors present, Lachares, was no fool and immediately decoded the pious gesture for what it was: raw ambition. 'This man,' he reportedly said to Syrianus, 'will either be a great good—or the contrary' (*V. Proc.* § 11). Lachares' reservation evidently struck a chord, otherwise the anecdote would not have survived, nor would Marinus have included it in his biography. To the older, already established students at the academy, the presence of a prodigy must have been cause of a significant amount of vexation. For example, we are told that the ageing Syrianus offered to teach a course on either the *Orphic Poems* or the *Chaldaean Oracles*. Domninus of Larissa (also known as Laodicea, in Syria), who went on to become a notable mathematician after being pushed out of the Academy on Syrianus' death,<sup>30</sup> wanted to be instructed in Orphism, but young Proclus insisted on the oracles (*V. Proc.* § 26). Domninus saw no reason to defer to the newcomer, and Proclus would not budge. The fact that Syrianus died before the stubborn dispute could be resolved suggests that the clash of personalities was real, uncompromising, and irrevocable. Proclus went on to write a repudiation of Domninus' interpretation of Plato,<sup>31</sup> and Domninus, we are told, could not tolerate people who regarded themselves as superior.<sup>32</sup> It is not difficult to imagine whom he had in mind.

Since the fruits of ambition, as Lachares rightly observed, can develop either for better or for worse, his teachers could not just sit back and wait to see what kind of apple Proclus would turn out to be. His *philotimia* had to be

channelled into the right direction, and the old Plutarch knew just how to make 'an instrument of his zeal' (*V. Proc.* § 12), as Marinus puts it: When Proclus took a *privatissimum* with him, on psychology, reading Aristotle's *De anima* and Plato's *Phaedo*, Plutarch suggested that Proclus write down what he, Plutarch, said; once these notes were written up, so he suggested, there would be 'a *Commentary on the Phaedo* by—Proclus!' Fame was thus tantalizingly easy to come by. The new arrival took the bait and never stopped writing.

## 1.6. THE DIADOCH

Not all of Proclus' enormous output of approximately fifty works, some of impressive length, is still extant.<sup>33</sup> In his prime, as director of the school, Proclus reportedly wrote about 700 lines a day (*V. Proc.* § 22), an amount of text comparable to the length of this paper.<sup>34</sup> If 'writing' meant dictating to a scribe, this number may well be close to the truth. Nonetheless, one suspects that Marinus was wielding his hagiographical pen with particular panache at this point. The claim must be taken with a grain of salt,<sup>35</sup> not just because of the sheer magnitude of the number in question but because it is *seven*, rather than six or eight hundred. Seven was a number of great significance for Proclus: in his *Timaeus* commentary (*in Tim.* I 151), Proclus maintains that seven, being a prime number, is a *fitting image of Athena* because it derives from the father (i.e. the monad) alone.<sup>36</sup>

There is another example of such numinous numerology related to Proclus' writing. After he had finished his *opus magnum* on the *Chaldaean Oracles*, Plutarch appeared to him in a dream with the message 'that the number of years he would live was going to be equal to the number of tetrads<sup>37</sup> that he had composed on the Oracles'.<sup>38</sup> That number was found to be seven times ten. And so, according to Plutarch's apparition, Proclus was destined to live for seventy years. But Proclus actually lived five years longer than that, and Marinus seems to be at pains to explain away this fact. His explanation is that during the last five years of his life, Proclus was not in good health. This may well have been so, yet the salient point to note is that we are dealing with a multiple of the number seven again, the fitting image of Athena. It is important to keep this number in mind, as it will be of some significance later.

Marinus strings his anecdotes together in a seemingly unrelated, haphazard way. The effect is that the portrait of his predecessor acquires an increasingly illustrious aura. There is the admiration of the teachers, the revelatory dream, the significant coincidence here and there, the ostentatious display of piety, the intellectual prowess. Reading his biography, one nagging question becomes more and more difficult to avoid. How did Marinus know all these personal



details about Proclus, the wealth of ‘true’ anecdotes and stories, the dreams and private portents along with their interpretation, not to mention the seventy-five-year-old horoscope parchment,<sup>39</sup> all of which play such a significant role in the biography of the deceased director? An answer to this question readily suggests itself: obviously from Proclus himself. To be sure, anecdotes tend to grow up and around great men like ivy around a thyrus, but one is probably not terribly far off the mark if one supposes that Proclus was happy to feed this sort of information on a regular basis to his students and associates.

Marinus relates a vivid example of this kind of self-fashioning in a scene that is not devoid of a fair amount of histrionic pathos. Marinus reports (*V. Proc.* § 31) that Proclus feared, correctly, that he would suffer from arthritis in old age, just as his father did. But Asclepius appeared to him in a dream in the form of a snake crawling about his head, from which point onwards the illness subsided. Whenever this and other memorable encounters with the gods were recalled by Proclus (*διηγείτο*, note the imperfect tense of repeated action), he would relive the experience, and with the pathos of an inspired rhapsode, tears would well up in his eyes (*οὐκ ἄνεν δακρύων*, *V. Proc.* § 31).

Sometimes, the anecdotes subtly undermine the image they are supposed to burnish. More than once Marinus hints at the fact that Proclus had a temper. He was irascible (*V. Proc.* § 16), even if he repressed his anger as far as possible (*V. Proc.* § 20). Right from the beginning of his arrival in Athens and even more so as director of the Academy, Proclus was somebody impossible to ignore. His colleagues and students alike were systematically primed to receive the impression of being in the presence of greatness personified—provided, of course, they gained access to the inner circle in the first place. Proclus was not only extremely demanding of himself, but also of his students, and he selected them carefully. Damascius reports that when the quite accomplished former official Hilarius—*nomen est omen*—arrived from Antioch to join the Academy, Proclus refused to admit him because he disapproved of the man’s lifestyle: Hilarius was a bit of a hedonist and had arrived in Athens with an entourage of concubines.<sup>40</sup>

Proclus evidently had a powerful philosophical mind, but it is equally evident that he was a deeply religious man. Philosophical exegesis, theological speculation, and personal spirituality were all seamlessly intertwined. Together, they constituted a way of life with no tension or contradiction between them, a life that was lived in this world while being entirely rooted in the spiritual world. One of Proclus’ most influential admirers, a man named Rufinus, swore that he had seen a halo surrounding Proclus’ head during one of his lectures (*V. Proc.* § 23).<sup>41</sup>

Perhaps the most endearing aspect of Proclus’ religious personality is the fact that he considered himself a guardian of all cults, a ‘hierophant of the

entire world' (*V. Proc.* § 19)—with the exception of Christianity of course. For a religious philosopher (i.e. for someone whose reasoning has not led him or her to the position of atheism), this is arguably a tenable intellectual position to embrace. If there is indeed a spiritual world over and above the natural world, and if we have no rational grounds for giving credence to the tenets of one religion or cult in preference to another, then we should respect and perhaps even cultivate all religions for what they are: limited attempts of the human mind to understand the realm of the spirit. Proclus believed that the deities reveal themselves to different people in different ways, depending on their individual predisposition to understand these revelations. In the words of Thomas Aquinas: *Operatur deus in unoquoque secundum eius proprietatem*—a doctrine that Proclus brought into its own, even though it already had, by his time, a long history.<sup>42</sup>

Since we have no good evidence that Proclus challenged Christian religion directly, neither politically, nor intellectually,<sup>43</sup> it is possible that the town-gown relationship in Athens during his tenure played out within the range of the typical.<sup>44</sup> The treatise detailing eighteen arguments for the eternity of the world, which the *Suda* condemns as an anti-Christian polemic,<sup>45</sup> can be read with some plausibility as a contribution to an intra-Platonic debate on the correct interpretation of the *Timaeus*.<sup>46</sup> What Proclus *does* say suggests, of course, that he thought that the Christians, along with a number of past Platonists who interpreted the *Timaeus* literally, made a philosophical mistake. But apart from the fact that Proclus advocated an unabashed polytheism, one finds very little that must be seen as a direct repudiation of Christian theology and culture.<sup>47</sup>

Any such repudiation would undoubtedly have been highly visible and political. Conjectures have been put forward, but in reality we have no solid evidence that Proclus clashed with local Christians. There were tensions at times, to be sure, and we know that Proclus evaded trouble at one point by going on a sabbatical to Lydia (*V. Proc.* § 15). As Marinus relates the story, the sojourn in Asia Minor was a great success, and tensions back home seem to have abated rather quickly. After less than one year, Athena guided Proclus safely back to her city.

Part of the reason why tensions between pagans and Christians did not flare up in Athens as they did elsewhere may have been the fact that Athenian Christians were keenly aware of the greatness of their pagan heritage. Athenian temples, unlike pagan temples elsewhere, were not destroyed but converted into churches in such a way that the precious architecture remained intact.<sup>48</sup> Indeed, under Proclus' leadership, the venerable pagan school seems to have flourished in the fifth century, which is not something one would expect to go on for decade after decade if conditions were intolerable. And although Marinus is at pains to convince his readers of the contrary, it seems unlikely that Proclus inserted himself much into the religious and political affairs of

the city.<sup>49</sup> He was evidently on excellent terms with some members of the Athenian elite,<sup>50</sup> yet Marinus cannot name a single concrete instance in which the voice of Proclus left a mark on the political landscape of Christian Athens. Jonathan Barnes seems right when he draws the negative conclusion: 'Proclus was not a prominent statesman.'<sup>51</sup>

But there is more to this: it is doubtful that Proclus ever regretted the fact. Much more than his political or cultural influence in Athens, what Proclus was really concerned about was his own personal relationship with the great beyond. This is something that can be inferred not only from Marinus' biography, but also from Proclus' so-called 'hymns'. Seven of them are extant: I. To the Sun; II. To Aphrodite; III. To the Muses; IV. To the Gods; V. To Aphrodite of Lycia; VI. To Hecate and Janus; VII. To Athena.<sup>52</sup> As the late Günter Zuntz points out in a brilliant monograph on the genre of philosophical hymns, Proclus' compositions are actually not really hymns at all, but rather personal prayers, i.e. expressions of wishes for his own well-being and salvation. Whereas Cleanthes in his poetry comes across as the spokesperson for all of humanity, Proclus' prayers revolve around himself:

Proclus . . . speaks on behalf of himself and about himself, and no one else—not even about the members of his brotherhood in the small and ever diminishing community of the Academy. And he prays for the salvation of his soul from the attachment to earthly matters; like any Christian recluse he castigates himself for sins against the spirit and forgetting the heavenly home, for the stains of unclean desires . . . yet with hardly less intensity he bothers the gods with requests for his earthly well-being, for his health, wealth, professional success, and reputation—everything for himself, Proclus; no one else is ever mentioned; no member of his school, let alone the suffering citizens of Athens, the Empire destroyed by barbarians, humanity.<sup>53</sup>

Even if one does not entirely share Zuntz's exasperation with Proclus in prayer,<sup>54</sup> one has to admit, reading the hymns, that many of Proclus' pious sentiments seem to float on the stale air of egocentricity, a trait that is not entirely at odds, it seems, with what we have been able to learn so far from Marinus. Proclus lived in a world that was full of demons, spirits, and higher deities; and these deities were in the business of constantly sending messages to him—in the constellation of the planets, in portents of all kinds (such as sparrows landing on one's leg and casual remarks made by porters), in apparitions, drinks taken along the way, and above all in dreams. A passage in Hermias' *Commentary on the Phaedrus* makes it clear that this sort of sensitivity to the messages sent by *daimones* was thought to be precisely the mark of the *spoudaios anêr*, the man of outstanding character and accomplishment. The uneducated many are able to venerate the higher gods, for sure, but they have not the sensibility to attend to communications sent by lesser deities.<sup>55</sup>

Proclus was a man the gods cared for and communicated with on a daily basis, a human with matchless connections to the divine. He thought of himself as special, as a member of the 'Hermaic chain', who firmly believed, once again because of a dream, 'that he had the soul of Nicomachus the Pythagorean' (*V. Proc.* § 28). To fully understand the audacity of the reincarnation claim one would have to know whose reincarnation Proclus thought Nicomachus was. Pythagoras perhaps? In any case, the point and effect of proclaiming a dream such as this was to make it known within the Academy that Proclus' earthly existence was no accidental piece of history but a matter of providence. Just like Socrates and other truly great philosophers, he was sent down to earth by the gods, for the greater benefit of mankind.<sup>56</sup> The point I am trying to make is that below the surface of the edifying biography we encounter a Proclus who is hard at work, not only lecturing and writing, but also tirelessly constructing and polishing the nimbus of his rarefied self-image. Whatever happened, one could ask, to the reserved tact of a man like Plotinus, the self-doubt of a Porphyry, let alone the ostentatious modesty of Socrates?

### 1.7. PROCLUS, ATHENA, AND THE PIGLET

The discussion so far suggests that, in an important sense, Proclus was the author of his own hagiography. Nothing underscores this conclusion more dramatically than the following anecdote. Again, we learn about something that happened to Proclus in the privacy of his sleep:

For it seemed to the philosopher in a dream that he was approached by a woman of fair aspect, who announced that he must prepare his house as quickly as possible. 'For the mistress of Athens,' she said, 'desires to live with you.'

(*V. Proc.* § 30; tr. Edwards)

Let us suppose that Proclus really had this dream.<sup>57</sup> It would then be hardly possible to exaggerate the momentous impact this dream must have had on a man like him, and of course on his entire community that witnessed this elevation of their leader far beyond the status of any ordinary mortal. Athena herself is knocking at Proclus' door, as a suppliant to boot, asking for protection! It is almost certain that Proclus' Athena dream stood in immediate connection with the removal of the colossal bronze statue of the goddess from the Athenian Acropolis to its new place in the oval forum of Constantinople.<sup>58</sup> This event occurred most likely in the period between 465 and 470, when Proclus was at the height of his career. Given the unquestioned, absolute importance he accorded to dreams, it is impossible to suppose that Proclus did not immediately leap into action to prepare his house for the arrival of the goddess. But what did he do? What does *anyone* do who is called upon to serve

as the protector of the patron deity of one's city? Frustratingly, Marinus does not tell us, handing us thereby an irresistible invitation to wander off into the territory of unfettered speculation.

Remains of luxurious late Roman villas along the southern slope of the Acropolis were first discovered in 1879, but the full extent of the complex of houses has only gradually come to light, most recently in the course of the construction of the Athenian metro system and the new Acropolis Museum.<sup>59</sup> The ruins in question are the remains of what once must have been a row of spectacular urban villas dating from the fifth century. In the 1950s, one particular villa had attracted the attention of the excavator, Giannis Meliades (cf. Meliades 1955). It consisted of a large main hall boasting a majestic semicircular apse and surrounded by a number of smaller rooms (see Plate 1.1). The hall had seven niches suitable for accommodating sculptures; its floor was covered with mosaics of geometric patterns. Since this villa stood roughly in the area Marinus identifies as the place of Proclus' congenial dwelling (in the vicinity of the Asclepieion and the altar of Dionysus near the great theatre, *V. Proc.* § 29), the excavator labelled the site 'The House of Proclus'. This somewhat tentative and hypothetical identification was later supported by both Alison Frantz and Arja Karivieri in important articles published in 1988 and 1994.<sup>60</sup> The site has since been covered, but the outlines of the walls are clearly marked on the ground level of the Dionysiou Areopagitou, not far at all from the spot where that street meets the steps coming down from the Acropolis. Moreover, the excavation is well documented, and some of the archaeological finds from the site are on display in the new Acropolis Museum in Athens, identified as stemming from the House of Proclus. The old hypothesis that archaeologists have indeed discovered the location of Proclus' house has always been taken with a grain of salt; more recently, it has faced some serious challenges.<sup>61</sup> But, in what follows, I would like to lend some additional support to the excavator's identification.

Apart from statues of Isis and Cybele, the portrait of a young man, an altar table, fragments of inscriptions, traces of elaborate mosaics and massive walls, the most surprising discovery was found underneath the ground level of the north-western section of the villa, viz. the remains of what appears to have been a sacrifice that involved the slaughter of a piglet. Plate 1.2 shows what the discovery looked like in situ, the knife still lodged in the sacrificial victim's neck. The entire find *sans* piglet is now on display in the new Acropolis Museum (Plate 1.3).<sup>62</sup> Apart from the corroded knife, we have a water or wine jug, an oil lamp, and exactly *seven* cups, no more, no less. Unfortunately, a plate that was also part of the find (still visible on the left of the photograph in Plate 1.2) has gone missing. The items are common tableware typical of the late fifth to early sixth centuries.

The fact that we are looking at the remains of a ritual and not at a pile of pottery disposed of after a banquet or discarded because it had arrived at the

end of its useful life is evident from a number of observations. First of all, as one can see from Plate 1.2, the skeleton of the animal was largely intact; the animal has not been carved up into separate portions to serve a group of dinner guests. Second, even though the tableware lay broken in pieces, it was possible to restore the items completely, without any traces of wear and tear. To judge from the completeness of preservation, this set of crockery was actually *new* when buried. Close examination of the oil lamp boasting a winged figure framed by a relief crescent decoration typical of the second half of the fifth century reveals that it has never been lit (see Plate 1.4). Third, the presence of the skeleton of a *piglet* suggests that we are dealing with the remains of the re-enactment of an ancient purification ritual. Importantly, although the blood of piglets could be used to purify a person from the pollution brought about by a crime,<sup>63</sup> piglets were frequently used in previous centuries to purify *spaces*, such as temple precincts or the Athenian assembly.<sup>64</sup> Needless to say, such sacrificial victims, which had now taken on any actual or potential pollution, were not eaten but rather discarded.<sup>65</sup>

Before we move on, it is important to remember how unusual this find is. Purification rituals would be performed in temples, near the shore, or in places that have otherwise numinous significance or political importance, but not in private homes. To be sure, in the Byzantine archaeological record we do encounter sacrificed animals as part of foundation rituals, but archaeologists seem to be in agreement that, for the period that concerns us here, the burial of a sacrificed pig in the ground inside a private dwelling is unheard of.<sup>66</sup> To sacrifice a pig to purify a private space and to bury the sacrificial victim together with a brand-new set of tableware must have been the response to a very special event that called for a very special sacrifice in a space unaccustomed to such a ritual. Some scholars have suggested a connection with the Mother of Gods, Demeter, or Gaia, all of which have a chthonic character.<sup>67</sup> Others have pointed to the cult of Cybele,<sup>68</sup> and still others drew comparisons with the Roman Terminalia, in which an animal was sacrificed in the context of a ceremony setting the boundary stone of a building.<sup>69</sup> None of this is impossible of course, but none of these proposals accounts very well for the singularity of this sacrifice in the residential area used by pagan philosophers in late fifth-century Athens.<sup>70</sup>

Whatever else the offering may have accomplished, it was clearly intended to sanctify a location, in this case, this particular dwelling. And it included banquet utensils that were not the remains of any actual banquet.<sup>71</sup> Does it seem too far-fetched to interpret them as symbols of hospitality? If so, the presence of *seven* cups is clearly significant. I suggest that we draw a connection to Proclus' belief that the number seven 'is' or 'is the image of' Athena and thereby link the piglet sacrifice to the most melodramatic dream Proclus ever had.

Let us suppose that, with the consecration of a brand-new set of dining utensils, including its seven cups, Proclus prepared his house (and in a broader

sense the entire Academy) for the presence of the city's deity. If this is so, how can we explain, in the context of such a gesture of theurgic hospitality, the presence of a piglet? In the dream, Athena evidently expected some sort of ritual to be performed ('Prepare the house!'), but as far as we can tell, she did not reveal what *kind* of ritual would be appropriate. Apart from the fact that piglets were used in the classical period to purify spaces, do we have any evidence of piglet purification rituals that are in any particular way connected with Athena? Indeed we do: In the first *epeisodion* of the *Eumenides* we encounter Orestes as he is pursued by the Furies who seek to avenge the murder of his own mother. As he arrives on the Acropolis in Athens, he says:

Taught by misfortune, I know the right moment to do many things, and in particular the situations in which it is proper to speak and likewise those where one should keep silent; and in this present predicament I have been instructed to speak. For the blood is growing drowsy and fading from my hand, and the pollution of matricide has been washed out: *at the hearth of the god Phoebus, when it was still fresh, it was expelled by means of the purification-sacrifice of a young pig (καθαρμοὶ χοιροκτόνοι)*. . . . Now, therefore, it is with pure lips that I call reverently on Athena, sovereign of this land, to come to my aid; and she will thereby, without any use of force, acquire myself, my land, and my Argive people as allies in righteous fidelity forever. But whether she is in a region of the land of Africa or close by the stream of her natal river Triton, . . . *may she come here*—a god can hear even from afar—so that she may be my liberator from these troubles. (Aeschylus, *Eumenides* 276–98; tr. A. H. Sommerstein, my emphasis)

If Orestes could purify himself with a piglet for the presence of Athena, so could Proclus. There is some further circumstantial evidence that this interpretation may be on the right track. In his *Hymn to Athena* (coincidentally (?) hymn number seven in the manuscript tradition), Proclus focalizes a suppliant, which is precisely the state of mind in which Orestes approaches the goddess. As far as one can tell from the extant hymns, this is the only text in which Proclus assumes that kind of stance towards any deity. In his case, of course, purification was not prompted by any kind of personal pollution as the consequence of a crime. Rather, the ritual served ceremoniously to prepare a space that was destined to become the new Parthenon: the House of Proclus.

## 1.8. DEATH AND BURIAL

It must have been tough to be a holy pagan man in the fifth century, to prevail in the fierce competition on the racecourse of spirituality, and to fulfil, if not exceed, the devotees' constant expectation of divine endorsement. What we get is the sense of a man who took his life seriously, who worked extremely hard, not only in the thorny business of philosophical exegesis, but also in the

business of promoting the cause of the ancient pagan deities. Of necessity, this task included a fair bit of reputation burnishing and self-promotion. Part of the personal propaganda he put out was the incessant reassurance, to himself and his associates, that his life was guided by the Greek deities of old. He cultivated and enjoyed a special relationship with them, praying and sacrificing to them, and even offering shelter to them when the Christians banished them from their temples. One feels for Marinus and Isidore: Proclus must have been a tough act to follow, with all that fame, the patronage of teachers and politicians, the productivity, the high-voltage speculations, the income,<sup>72</sup> the magnificent real estate, and the benevolent blessings of demons and gods.

This, and much else, lies beneath the surface of Proclus' biography; if we fail to uncover the significant details with their nuances and tensions that resonate with the faint echoes of the reality behind the rhetoric, we would deprive ourselves of an understanding of the enormous effort that went into a life fashioned after the demanding blueprint of virtue.<sup>73</sup> It must have been a constant struggle to negotiate one's raw ambition and calibrate it to one's audience in an increasingly hostile society, to sell oneself successfully in the face of perpetual competition, and not to lose confidence in one's own greatness. Without a doubt, the pursuit of this sort of life must have been driven to some extent by the high expectations of the public in general and the philosophical community in particular. The last pagans needed a Proclus; they flocked to him precisely because of his extroverted religious zeal and the ostentatious claim to a privileged connection with the divine. To the extent that this is true, we are dealing with the confluence of personal ambitions and social expectations that obeyed its own logic and dynamic. But this is not to say that anyone in Proclus' position would turn out a Proclus. Neither his immediate predecessors nor his immediate successors felt the impulse to satisfy the spiritual expectations of the many by a life devoted to self-aggrandizement.

Let us then turn, finally, to Proclus' epitaph; it nicely underpins much of what could be gleaned from this reading of Marinus. Proclus composed the epigram himself; the tombstone on which it was inscribed is lost, but the elegant verses are preserved, again, by Marinus (*V. Proc.* § 36):

I, Proclus, was born of Lycian stock; Syrianus  
 Raised me here (in Athens) as successor to his teaching.  
 This shared tomb received both our bodies;  
 May a single place also obtain our souls.  
 (IG II/III<sup>2</sup>, 13452)<sup>74</sup>

Clearly, the practice of burnishing one's reputation had to continue after death. The tapping into the power of patronage is one motif: remarkably, Proclus requested that he be buried together with Syrianus, in the same tomb in which his teacher had been laid to rest nearly fifty years earlier. The practice of common graves, although not unusual centuries later,<sup>75</sup> seems to have been very uncommon, indeed, at that time.<sup>76</sup>



The other motif—relentless self-referentiality—is also on ready display. In the very first line of the epitaph in Greek, Proclus manages to evoke his own person five times in the course of seven words (first there is his name, then the word ‘I’, then the first person singular of the verb, the description of himself as ‘Lykios’, and finally a relative pronoun referring back to the word ‘Proklos’). Immediately thereafter we are reminded of his high achievement in this world: having been the successor of the famous Syrianus. The epitaph ends with the hope of being reunited with his most influential teacher. By sheer luck archaeologists have discovered the tombstone of Syrianus. A comparison of the epitaphs reveals the fact that Proclus’ inscription bears the same formal structure as Syrianus’ epitaph: two elegiac couplets, even if the intertextual gesture does not extend down to the level of corresponding feet.

That Proclus did not supplant Syrianus’ tombstone but that the two epitaphs were set side by side can be inferred from the fact that they are in conversation with one another. To find out what place for their souls Proclus was praying for, one had to turn to the inscription on Syrianus’ stone: both of their hopes were set for nothing less than residence in heaven, perhaps even at the northern pole (*polos*) of the axis of the celestial gods.<sup>77</sup>

Proclus died on 17 April 485. Throughout his life, he put himself under enormous pressure to prevail in his pursuit of the best possible life, pouring his entire physical, intellectual, and spiritual energy into the resuscitation of a waning culture of intellectual and spiritual paganism. Even though he was in all likelihood in many ways ‘a difficult person’, at once uncompromisingly demanding and egocentric, posterity owes him a lot.<sup>78</sup>

## NOTES

1. On Proclus’ lasting influence, see Ch. 15.
2. The fragments have been collected by Zintzen (1967) and re-edited and translated by Athanassiadi (1999) who argues for the character of the work as a ‘philosophical history’. Even if that is the case, the historical perspective is rather limited: Damascius only gave an account of the people and events surrounding the Neoplatonic schools in Athens and Alexandria in the late 5th cent.
3. Marinus ‘malt das Bild seines Meisters auf Goldgrund’, Zuntz (2005: 101).
4. This is Neapolis in Palestine (modern Nablus), 30 miles north of Jerusalem. Marinus was either a Samaritan or a Jew; on Marinus, see Masullo (1985), Guthrie (1986), Saffrey and Segonds (2001).
5. Cf. the by now classic article by Peter Brown (1971).
6. See e.g. Porphyry, *Sent.* 32 and Wildberg (2002b). On Proclus’ ethics, see Ch. 13.
7. The saying means that if you do something in excess, you will come to harm. It is first reported by Plato, *Cratylus* 413a, and is a metaphor from the pentathlon competition. The pentathlete Phayllos of Croton jumped over the trenches and broke his legs. See Saffrey and Segonds (2001: 56–7 n. 11).

8. Ibycus, Fr. 29 (Page = Fr. 24 Bergk). Marinus presumably read this in Plato, *Phaedrus* 242d.
9. Porphyry e.g. in his *Life of Plotinus* written some thirty years after Plotinus' death (see Edwards 2000: pp. xxxiv and 114 n. 395) begins in an entirely different way with the honoree, not some complicated conditional clause about himself: 'Plotinus, the philosopher of our times...' That is not to say that Porphyry does not find a way of self-aggrandizement as he proceeds; cf. Männlein-Robert (2002). Iamblichus' account of the life of Pythagoras begins with an invocation of the help of the gods.
10. This can be inferred from the fact that Marinus mentions as forecast the solar eclipse that occurred thirteen months after Proclus' death, on 19 May 486. He would not have mentioned the prediction if it had turned out to be false; see *V. Proc.* § 37 and Edwards (2000: 114 n. 395).
11. None of which survive.
12. It is a curious fact that Marinus also composed a life of Proclus in poetry (ἐπικῶς), see Suda *M* 198 Adler (= *FGH Cont.* 1083 T12 Radicke): *Μαρίνος Νεαπολίτης, φιλόσοφος καὶ ῥήτωρ, μαθητῆς Πρόκλου τοῦ φιλοσόφου καὶ διάδοχος ἔγραψε βίον Πρόκλου τοῦ αὐτοῦ διδασκάλου καὶ καταλογάδην καὶ ἐπικῶς καὶ ἄλλα τινὰ φιλοσόφων ζητήματα*. As part of the genre of late ancient Neoplatonic poetics, the work might be considered a response to Christian hagiographical poetry and almost certainly intended for a broader audience; for a discussion of this, see Agosti (2009). In contrast to Marinus' prose biography of Proclus, posterity did not think that the poem was worth preserving.
13. Proclus and Isidore seem to have been struck by mutual affection from the start; cf. Damascius, *Phil. hist.* (= *V. Isid.*), Fr. 59A Athanassiadi: 'A feeling of great joy came upon Isidore as he caught sight of Proclus, whose appearance was both grave and formidable, so that he seemed to be gazing on the face of philosophy itself. Proclus too marveled at Isidore's appearance as being divine and full of the philosophical life within.'
14. Cf. Damascius, *Phil. hist.* (= *V. Isid.*), Fr. 97F Athanassiadi.
15. Suda, s.v. 'Marinos', *M* 199 (= Athanassiadi Fr. 38A). To judge from other remarks in Damascius' philosophical memoirs, there were few reasons to have a high opinion of Marinus. The *opinio communis* seems to have been that the much more speculatively minded Isidore of Alexandria was a more fitting heir to Proclus' legacy; see Damascius, *Phil. hist.* (= *V. Isid.*), Fr. 98C-F and Fr. 148 Athanassiadi. Personalities no doubt played a role as well, but one can see, in a way, that Proclus, Isidore, and Damascius are philosophically cut from a similar sort of cloth, whereas Marinus stood at an oblique angle to the prevailing culture of speculative Platonism. He, together with colleagues like Domninus and Eutocius in the next generation, represented the mathematical side of Neoplatonism.
16. Further hints pointing in the same direction can be picked up from Damascius' account of the period, e.g. *Phil. hist.* (= *V. Isid.*), Fr. 68 Athanassiadi: 'Among Proclus' pupils there was also another Zeno at the same time. He was of Pergamene origin and he too was by nature rather deficient in learning, but a good person and with moral discipline. Now which one of the two Zenos provided Sallustius with the pretext for the quarrel with Proclus I cannot say.'
17. Cf. Damascius, *Phil. hist.* (= *V. Isid.*), Fr. 5B Athanassiadi reports of Isidore's soul: 'Flying down from the vault of heaven, it attached itself to life on earth.' According

- to Athanassiadi (1999: 83 n. 22), '(t)he Neoplatonists believed that before their descent the souls formed groups under the protection of individual gods who each imparted to them his or her own characteristic: Proclus in *Tim.* III 279 ... Proclus too was part of the Hermaic chain (V. *Proc.* § 28); cf. his in *Tim.* II 294.'
18. Iamblichus makes such claims for Pythagoras; see his V. *Pyth.* 2.5–8. The Neoplatonists believed in reincarnation, of course, and Proclus claimed, on the evidence of a dream, to be the reincarnation of the 2nd-cent. Neopythagorean philosopher Nicomachus (V. *Proc.* § 28).
  19. Some uncertainty remains; on the problem of Proclus' horoscope, see Neugebauer (1975: ii. 1055–8); Jones (1999).
  20. DePalma Digeser (2010: 594).
  21. According to the 2nd-cent. CE Roman grammarian Sextus Pompeius Festus, excerpted by the 8th-cent. monk Paulus Diaconus, *Proculum inter cognomina eum dicunt, qui natus est patre peregrinante a patria procul*, 225.2 (ed. Müller) = 251.14 (ed. Lindsay). Pace Steinbauer (2007), who offers a different explanation; according to him, Proculus 'originally perhaps meant "the one who demands or claims (the inheritance?)"'.<sup>1</sup>
  22. Proclus also makes an emphatic statement about his local origins in the fifth hymn, addressed to the Lycian Aphrodite: *Λυκίων γὰρ ἀφ' αἵματος εἰμι καὶ αὐτός* (*Hymni* V.13). As soon as Proclus had grown up, however, there was not much to be gained from staying in the ancestral province or ever returning there. Travels away from Athens later in his life took him to Lydia (V. *Proc.* § 15), further north in Asia Minor, but apparently never back to Lycia.
  23. Experts of the history of astronomy are in agreement that the conjunction of positions reported is impossible and cannot have been recorded correctly. Jones (1999) argues for the following positions, taken from Ptolemy's *Handy Tables*: Sun Aquarius 17° 36'; Moon Gemini 4° 16'; Saturn Taurus 24° 22'; Jupiter Taurus 24° 41'; Mars Sagittarius 29° 52'; Venus Pisces 0° 21'; Mercury Aquarius 4° 42'. If this is correct, this horoscope would have been cast for noon, 7 Feb. 412.
  24. Cf. Alexander Jones' splendid article published in 1999. See Jones (1999) for further references. On the Renaissance discussion of the horoscope, see Saffrey and Segonds (2001: 185–201).
  25. This is the plausible suggestion offered by Jones (1999: 88).
  26. The dream experience is reminiscent of Socrates' dream in the *Phaedo*, in which he is being told to practise the arts; cf. *Phaedo* 60e. Marinus adds that this particular vision was 'the reason for his strong association with the goddess, so that he celebrated her festivals particularly and observed her rites with great enthusiasm' (V. *Proc.* § 6; tr. Edwards). Cf. also Saffrey and Segonds (2001: 79 n. 10).
  27. Cf. Damascius, *Phil. hist.* (= V. *Isid.*), Fr. 9C Athanassiadi. Apparently, Isidore woke up in the morning and 'with his soul still possessed by the divine voice, he related his dreams', *ibid.*, Fr. 27 Athanassiadi. It is safe to assume that Proclus before him did just that.
  28. *Ibid.*, Fr. 56 Athanassiadi.
  29. *Ibid.* Aedesia married the philosopher Hermias instead, who, like Proclus, was a student of Syrianus. Among the children of Aedesia and Hermias were the philosophers Ammonius Hermeiou and Heliodorus, who in turn became students

of Proclus and went on to careers in Alexandria. Judging from what Damascius says, Aedesia was held in the highest regard in Alexandria.

30. See Hultsch (1903).
31. Cf. Damascius, *Phil. hist.* (= *V. Isid.*), Fr. 89A Athanassiadi.
32. Damascius, *Phil. hist.* (= *V. Isid.*), Fr. 93 Athanassiadi. In his *Commentary on the First Alcibiades*, Proclus discusses Alcibiades' arrogance (*φρόνημα*) and suggests 'that such characters seem to possess an affinity to the divine beauty itself. . . . This condition, when carefully trained, is the beginning of salvation for souls' (*in Alc.* 99; cf. O'Neill and Westerink 2011: 130).
33. See the list of Proclus' works in appendix II of this volume and Helmig and Steel (2011).
34. In any case, much more than even a prolific writer such as Thomas Mann would manage to produce as the result of a day's work: six pages on average.
35. To be fair, Proclus did write a great deal, and the high average number of lines per day becomes somewhat more credible if one assumes that Proclus either dictated or used shorthand, which was then converted into longhand by a scribe. Something like this is reported by Marinus (*V. Proc.* § 27): The apparition of Syrianus had appeared to Proclus in a dream, forbidding him to write a commentary on the Orphic poems. But Marinus persuades Proclus to jot down what he had to say 'in the margin of the commentaries' of previous philosophers; these notes were then collated to form a long tome of Proclus' own comments. Intriguingly, marginal notes have been discovered in the only surviving papyrus fragment of Plato's *Republic* (VIII 546bc). The papyrus (*Oxyrhynchus Papyrus* XV 1808) dates from the 2nd cent., but the marginalia, written in shorthand, are extremely learned and have been shown to conform closely to Proclus' extant comments on the *Republic*. See McNamee (2001) and esp. McNamee and Jacovides (2003).
36. See Edwards (2000: 97 n. 277). The association of the number seven and Athena is presumably already Pythagorean. Alexander of Aphrodisias, reporting on Aristotle's *On the Pythagoreans* (cf. *Aristotelis Fragmenta Selecta*, *Περὶ τῶν Πυθαγορείων*, Fr. 13 Ross), says that seven is 'Athena' because it neither generates any number in the first decade nor is generated by them. I owe the reference to Stephen Menn.
37. One *tetrad* or *quaternion* consisted of four folded parchment sheets, adding up to sixteen blank pages.
38. *V. Proc.* § 26; see Edwards (2000: 97).
39. Jones (1999: 87) suggests that Marinus found the horoscope among Proclus' papers, but I suspect that a more active involvement on the part of Proclus is not implausible: this sort of thing was passed around and subjected to repeated analysis.
40. Damascius, *Phil. hist.* (= *V. Isid.*), Fr. 91A Athanassiadi.
41. On this wealthy Athenian aristocrat, see Watts (2006: 106).
42. On the history of this theological principle, see Wildberg (2002a: § VII.3).
43. See the extensive discussion by Philippe Hoffmann (2012b) and cf. Saffrey (1975). Hoffmann suggests that the sentiment Proclus harboured towards Christians was one of disdain rather than anything else. Christians were part of the vulgar and ignorant masses incapable of raising themselves to the science of theology proper.

He concludes (196): 'Le dossier de textes que nous venons d'étudier montre que Proclus n'appréhendait la réalité de son temps, et les chrétiens qui l'entouraient, qu'avec des schèmes de pensée directement issus de la science philosophique platonicienne construite et enseignée par lui-même et par les philosophes de son école.'

44. To get a sense of the town-gown relationships in 4th-cent. Athens, see the account given by Eunapius.
45. Suda II 2473.9–11: 'Ἐπιχειρήματα κατὰ Χριστιανῶν ιη'. οὗτός ἐστι Πρόκλος, ὁ δεύτερος μετὰ Πορφύριον κατὰ Χριστιανῶν τὴν μαρὰν καὶ ἐφύβριστον αὐτοῦ γλῶσσαν κινήσας.
46. So Barnes (2013: 178–82).
47. In a general way, one must be careful not to overstate in broad and general strokes the magnitude of the cultural opposition between paganism and Christianity in late antiquity. To be sure, there were periods of brutal persecution, and hostilities tended to flare up from time to time to such dangerous levels that they left lasting impressions in the collective memory. But in the six or seven generations from the reign of Constantine to the reign of Justinian, there were, and must have been, reasonably long periods of tolerable coexistence. Pagans taught grammar, rhetoric, law, and philosophy, and rendered invaluable service on all levels of imperial and local administration. In addition, Christian elites made sure they got a proper education and went on to use the acquired philosophical terminology, hermeneutical acumen, rhetorical virtuosity, and rules of logic against one another to great effect in their various battles over creed, doctrine, and liturgy.
48. I owe this observation to Johannes Hahn via personal communication.
49. Except, if we can believe it, as rainmaker and protector against earthquakes (*V. Proc.* § 28) and healer (*V. Proc.* § 29).
50. And perhaps not only through his connection to Plutarch's family. Damascius, *Phil. hist.* (= *V. Isid.*), Fr. 43E Athanassiadi, relates in passing that, in Athens at any rate, the rulers customarily paid a certain amount of respect to the city's philosophers.
51. See Barnes (2013: 177 and cf. 187). One must also bear in mind that Athens offered little opportunity for big-stage politics, given how marginal, insignificant, and provincial the city was at the time.
52. For an edition of the hymns, see Vogt (1957). We also have two tiny fragments, one from a hymn to Dionysus. Marinus reports Proclus' composition of hymns in two places, *V. Proc.* § 19 and § 26. In late antiquity, Proclus' hymns were cited by John Lydus and Olympiodorus; see Vogt (1957: 1–2). As to modern scholarship on the hymns, see Van den Berg (2001), Zuntz (2005), Kalligas (2009), and Ch. 11 in this volume.
53. Cf. Zuntz (2005: 154); my tr. from the German.
54. One might argue e.g. that the hymns might have been published to be sung by others, in which case their self-referentiality would serve a different purpose and change from occasion to occasion.
55. See Hermias, in *Phdr.* 70.11–71.23 Lucarini–Moreschini (= 66.1–67.12 Couvreur). I owe this reference to Antonio Vargas.
56. Cf. the first sentence of Hermias' *Phaedrus* scholia, in *Phdr.* 1.5–6.
57. One reason to suspect fabrication is the fact that the language in which Marinus relates the anecdote is strongly reminiscent of Socrates' dream in the *Crito* 44a–b. There we read: 'Ἐδόκει τίς μοι γυνή προσελθοῦσα καλὴ καὶ εὐειδής...' When

Marinus recollects what Proclus told him, he writes: 'Ἐδόκει γὰρ τῷ φιλοσόφῳ ὄναρ φοιτᾶν παρ' αὐτὸν εὐσχήμων τίς γυνή...'

58. It is believed that the statue was the work of Pheidias and stood between 7 and 16 m high. For a reconstruction of the visual impression of the statue on the Acropolis, see Travlos (1971: 69) with figs 88–9. The statue's removal from Athens is a harsh symbol of the steep decline of the importance and power of the city in late antiquity. It was destroyed in the year 1203 by a 'mob of drunken rioters', see Frantz (1988: 76–7) and Lundgreen (1997).
59. See now Caruso (2013).
60. See Frantz (1988: 42–4) and Karivieri (1994). For a more recent and lavishly illustrated account of the excavations of late Roman houses south of the Acropolis, see Brouskari (2004). On the House of Proclus in particular, see Brouskari (2004: 56–80).
61. In the course of the construction of the new Acropolis Museum at Athens, more villas of the same calibre have been discovered. It seems that the entire area on the southern side of the Acropolis was inhabited by elite citizens in the 5th cent., judging from the archaeological finds, by philosophers associated with the Academy and their households. Recently, and in light of these new discoveries, Ada Caruso has cast doubt on the identification of the 'House of Proclus' with the house of Proclus, but does not offer compelling evidence to support a different identification (Caruso 2013: 174–83). For my purposes, it suffices that the entire area including the house in which the sacrifice was found must be supposed to have been the actual site of the 5th-cent. Academy.
62. See also the description of the find in Karra (2012). Karra dates the find to the early 6th cent. and connects it, tentatively and without any further argument, with the closing of the Academy by the emperor Justinian in 529.
63. For example, in Apollonius' *Argonautica*, Circe purifies Medea and Jason of the murder of Medea's brother, see IV 700–16.
64. 'Before every meeting of the council and assembly in Athens, a young pig was killed and its corpse carried round the circumference of the meeting-place by special officials known as *peristiarchoi*.' Parker (1983: 21), with reference to Jacoby, *Fragmente der Griechischen Historiker*, 334 (on Istros), Fr. 16. Cf. also the *scholia* to Aristophanes, *Eccl.* 128. The Apollo temple on Delos was purified by pig's blood once a month, see Parker (1983: 30).
65. Young pigs were also commonly used for the purpose of purification in the context of the lesser Eleusinian mysteries, although they did not serve for purification in a strict sense since the meat was eaten, see Parker (1983: 283). The sacrifice of a pig is also referred to in passing in Plato, *Republic* II 378a.
66. As far as I can tell, none of the archaeologists who examined the find suggested that the piglet sacrifice was in any way connected to the foundation walls of the building.
67. See Karivieri (1994: 135): 'the blood of the piglet was let in the sacrifice and the animal may have been buried with the grave offerings as a gift for the earth and the Great Goddess'. Brouskari (2004: 74) seems to concur.
68. The altar dedicated to Cybele was in an entirely different part of the house, on the eastern side of the apsis room.
69. See Karivieri (1994: 135) with further references.
70. The fact that this whole area was inhabited by philosophers is confirmed by recent archaeological finds; see Caruso (2013).

71. So also Karivieri (1994: 135).
72. According to Damascius, *Phil. hist.* (= *V. Isid.*), Fr. 102 Athanassiadi, the income of the school was in excess of 1000 gold solidi a year (= 4.5 kg of more or less pure gold), the equivalent of US\$500,000 in 1996, according to Siorvanes' estimate (1996: 22). If correct, that amount would amount to an operating budget of roughly \$750,000 today.
73. For a general and somewhat more sympathetic account of this sort of life see Fowden and Fowden (2008).
74. *Πρόκλος ἐγὼ γενόμεν Ἀύκιος γένος, ὃν Συριανὸς  
ἐνθάδ' ἀμοιβὸν ἐῆς θρέψε διδασκαλίας.  
ξυνὸς δ' ἀμφοτέρων ὅδε σώματα δέξατο τύμβος·  
αἶθε δὲ καὶ ψυχὰς χώρος ἔεις λελάχοι.*
75. There is evidence of multiple, simultaneous entombments from later Byzantine times, in Athens and elsewhere (Fotini Kondyli, personal communication).
76. Cf. IG II/III<sup>2</sup> 13452. It is stated there that there are only seven, perhaps nine, other examples of grave markers that testify to double entombment. On the general practice of funerary inscriptions in late antiquity, see McLean (2002: 260–88).
77. On the possible location of the grave, see Marchiandi (2006) and cf. *Supplementum Epigraphicum Graecum* (SEG) lvi, no. 37. The mutilated Syrianus epitaph reads:

$\begin{array}{c} \text{---} \text{---} ] \text{ μὲν Συριανὸς ἔχεν πόλον, εὐτ' ἐπὶ γ[ } \\ \text{---} \text{---} ] \text{μενος μακάρων ἀρτιτελὴς ἔμολε[.} \\ \text{---} \text{---} ] \text{ δ' ἀνθρώποισι ὅπως σοφὸν ἐστι γ[ } \\ \text{---} \text{---} ] \text{θανάτων ἐς πόλον αὐτὶς ἔβη.} \end{array}$   
 (IG II/III<sup>2</sup>, 13451)

The reconstruction of the missing text is difficult and controversial; for a detailed philological discussion, see Agosti (2008). While the meaning of the first two lines seems particularly elusive, a possible restoration of the second distich might read as follows:

$\begin{array}{c} \text{---} \text{---} ] \text{ μὲν Συριανὸς ἔχεν πόλον, εὐτ' ἐπὶ γ[αἶαν} \\ \text{---} \text{---} ] \text{μενος μακάρων ἀρτιτελὴς ἔμολε[ν.} \\ \text{δείξας] δ' ἀνθρώποισι ὅπως σοφὸν ἐστι γ[ενέσθαι} \\ \text{αἶψά πάλιν ἀ]θανάτων ἐς πόλον αὐτὶς ἔβη.} \end{array}$

‘... But having shown humans how it is possible to become wise, he swiftly returned again to the vault of the immortals (i.e. the heavens).’

78. I am grateful to the Acropolis Museum in Athens for giving generous permission to publish the photographs of the piglet sacrifice. Special thanks to Angelica Kouveli of the Acropolis Museum, and to Klaus-Valtin von Eickstedt for taking the photographs. I am also indebted to Gianfranco Agosti, Jacob Correia, Pavlos Kalligas, John Magee, Stephen Menn, Antonio Vargas, and the editors of this volume for their numerous suggestions for improvement and clarification.

## Proclus' Place in the Platonic Tradition

*Harold Tarrant*

### 2.1. INTRODUCTION

One often speaks of a tradition or traditions of Platonism.<sup>1</sup> Various things can be meant by this, but the fundamental idea is that Platonism has been handed down from generation to generation in some recognizable form, often, but not invariably, through being handed down from master to pupil. Some used to postulate a continued succession at Athens from the founding of Plato's Academy around 387 BC until AD 529, when Justinian's edicts halted such teaching at Athens, but John Glucker (1978) has demonstrated the lack of evidence for the continuation of any recognizable institution at various intervening points of history. Interesting developments often occurred in small private schools with no special claim to speak on Plato's behalf, sometimes far from the movement's birthplace in Athens.

To speak of 'developments' suggests that no immutable system of doctrines had continuously defined ancient Platonism. As we shall see, Platonism was free to grow, blossom, and mature in ways foreign to Epicureanism, Stoicism, and Aristotelianism. It could adopt other philosophies as its allies or turn its back on them when appropriate. It could adopt other collections of texts as authoritative and question Plato's authority if necessary. It could recommend rules of living that had no obvious context in Plato's works and choose which works it would prioritize. Above all, it was not simply concerned with the reproduction of Platonic doctrines and still less with that of Plato's myths. Its brief was to carry forward Plato's work into new generations rather than to defend Plato and the apparent meaning of his dialogues against new lines of attack. At times *how* Platonists philosophized was more important than the precise conclusions at which they arrived. However, there remained certain fundamentals without which it was difficult to claim allegiance to Plato.

Platonism was centrally concerned with demonstrating that the world within which we find ourselves is not such as can be explained in terms of



materialist and especially mechanist theories.<sup>2</sup> There is something far more fundamental to understanding it than is directly accessible to the senses. Whatever this may be, humans had to become aware of it by other channels. Likewise, there is something more to human life than our physical welfare, for human happiness depended upon the health of something within us that was essentially non-bodily and more enduring than the body. Only by looking after this could we hope to enjoy lasting happiness, and only by observing certain basic moral requirements could it be looked after. Hence, a Platonist would be dedicated to pursuing the needs of a non-bodily entity, seen in the context of a world whose primary forces are non-bodily, and work towards the orderly governance of the universe. Epistemology had to serve these metaphysical ideas, providing an expectation that we could become aware of much of non-bodily reality before explaining the confusing physical world around us. The usual Platonist response to this challenge was to postulate a dim, innate, memory-like awareness of non-bodily Ideas and an image-like relationship between the physical particulars of this world and those Ideas beyond. Our familiarity with the images had the potential to assist in fine-tuning our understanding of the originals.<sup>3</sup>

Platonism was also characterized by a response to the reading of Plato's dialogues, of which the most important well into early imperial times had been the *Timaeus*. That work described the creation of the universe, comprising body, soul, and intellect, from pre-existing materials and in conformity with Idea-paradigms, by a craftsman-figure who was both father and maker. However, given the range of possibilities allowed to the interpreter by Plato's indirect manner of presenting his thoughts, Platonists could argue about whether a temporal creation, rather than an ongoing creation process, was intended, and whether the personal terms in which Plato described his creator implied anything more than a dynamic force at work in crafting the universe. Proclus and his immediate predecessors rejected the idea of a beginning of the universe in time and produced a complex account of the nature of the craftsman-god. A similar freedom was allowed in the interpretation of many less central issues, making it possible (even for those who agreed on the central texts of Platonism) to produce quite different accounts of a Platonic system.

This freedom to interpret gave Platonists a chance to regard other philosophies either as allies or as opponents. The lead had been taken in the early first century BC when Antiochus of Ascalon parted company with the official head of Plato's school in claiming that the Platonic and Aristotelian schools shared an identical heritage and that their principal differences with the Stoics arose from Stoic use of innovative terminology.<sup>4</sup> Stoic terminology, having become part of the *lingua franca* of philosophy, began to be employed by Platonists, along with selected Stoic doctrines where these offered the right explanatory

opportunities. Yet Stoic materialism set it apart from Platonism, and Platonists did not view the principal figures of Stoicism as authorities.

Aristotle, however, who studied with Plato in person, remained influential for many Platonists,<sup>5</sup> and Proclus lived during a period of over three centuries (c. AD 250–600) when it was normal to study the logical works of Aristotle before in-depth reading of Plato and to regard Aristotle and Plato as somehow ‘in harmony’, affirming that their key doctrines do not conflict when correctly understood. Given the number of works in which Aristotle appeared to attack Plato directly, this often involved deft interpretative moves,<sup>6</sup> in which Proclus was fairly skilled when he wanted to be. In late antiquity Platonists who had studied initially at the other main school in Alexandria showed a greater inclination to respect Aristotle and to hold the harmony theory in a strong sense, while the Athenian School refounded by Plutarch of Athens, and strengthened by Syrianus and his pupil Proclus, was more critical of Aristotle’s apparent departures from his master’s vision. While Syrianus’ *Commentary on* (parts of) *the Metaphysics* has survived (Dillon and O’Meara 2008, O’Meara and Dillon 2006) and while Proclus is said to have read all of Aristotle with him (Marinus, V. *Procl.* § 13), it is striking that neither philosopher was ever in danger of becoming too devoted to him. When Syrianus himself (Suda, Σ 1662) is credited with a work on ‘harmony’, it is not about the harmony of Plato with Aristotle but rather with Pythagoras and Orpheus. On occasion, Proclus could be extremely critical of Aristotle,<sup>7</sup> who may be seen as betraying Platonic principles of causality (*in Tim.* I 7.10–16), as a master of some hybrid art of dialectic, syllogistic, and elenctic (*in Tim.* III 114.7, 115.10–14) or as simply too given to quibbling (*φίλαρις*, *in Tim.* III 130.3–24).

## 2.2. KNOWN PLATONISTS OF THE COMMON ERA

The biographer Plutarch of Chaeronea, from the first and second centuries (often known as the Middle Platonist era), has left us also the largest quantity of broadly Platonist philosophical writing in the first two centuries AD, including dialogues or essays on particular philosophic problems, religious issues, and issues of Platonic interpretation. He tackled problems of Platonic mathematics, the special interest of his contemporary Theon of Smyrna who has left us an *Exposition on Mathematics Useful for Reading Plato*. Plutarch is the earliest Platonic interpreter regularly cited by Proclus, and from the following century he refers to many more, including Taurus, Albinus, Atticus, Severus, and Harpocration. Atticus was a literal reader of Plato, strongly opposed to attempts to assimilate Plato to Aristotle or other philosophers. Platonist

handbooks, attempting to compress much Platonic doctrine into a small space, were written by an otherwise unknown Alcinous and by the Latin author Apuleius. Others of the same era, presumably rivals of those who declared themselves Platonists, exploited Platonic texts as a potential source for Pythagorean doctrines: Moderatus, Numenius, and Cronius. Numenius' contribution in seeing deep hidden meaning behind Platonic and other texts will shortly be discussed.

After about a century of intense Platonist activity, there is a gap in our knowledge until the school that flourished around Plotinus in Rome from around AD 244–70. Traditionally a 'founder' of 'Neoplatonism', Plotinus would not himself have claimed such a role. However, it is his pupil Porphyry and Iamblichus, who had himself heard Porphyry, who set Platonism on the path towards Proclus. Theodorus of Asine appears to have been the most important figure between Iamblichus and Plutarch of Athens (d. AD 432), who refounded the Athenian school before passing it on for the next five years to Proclus' revered teacher Syrianus. After Proclean leadership in the mid-fifth century, the school passed to his unimpressive successor and biographer, Marinus, and indirectly to Damascius. Hermias of Alexandria, another student of Syrianus, preserves what appear to be his teacher's authentic doctrines in an extant commentary on Plato's *Phaedrus*, but it is hard to determine his influence on the more practical Platonism of his pupil Ammonius and Ammonius' successor, Olympiodorus, at Alexandria. The influence of Proclus is no doubt to be found in Olympiodorus' later commentaries (on the *Alcibiades* and *Phaedo*), and also in the anonymous *Prolegomena to Plato's Philosophy* from the same school. The influence of Proclus will of course be discussed later in the volume, but we should note that it was widespread, and that even some bitter opponents admired him as the one who gave pagan Platonism its fullest and most eloquent expression. So detailed was his reading of the Platonic dialogues, so systematic were his doctrines, and so great his commitment that interpreters thereafter perhaps found it too great a task to compete with him. Certainly, his successor Marinus could not do so, but even the more impressive Damascius seemed unable to overcome an element of scepticism.<sup>8</sup>

### 2.3. THE CURRICULUM

It is vital that one understand Proclus within the context of what was routinely studied at his time. We have mentioned that Aristotle's logical works were, and this was in part due to the enormous industry of Porphyry in writings about the *Categories* in particular.<sup>9</sup> Other works of Aristotle such as the

*Physics* and *Metaphysics* were also widely commented on, strongly suggesting an established teaching tradition. As we have mentioned, Proclus read all of Aristotle with Syrianus, though this was probably exceptional, and Marinus says that he also studied the *De Anima* along with Plato's *Phaedo* with the ageing Plutarch of Athens (V. *Procl.* § 12). Aristotle, however, was usually regarded as a preliminary to the study of Plato.

The anonymous *Prolegomena to Plato's Philosophy* (26.16–44) detail the twelve Platonic works usually studied from the time of Iamblichus, most of them popular long before this. First come a group of ten, beginning with the most introductory and ending with the most profound: *Alcibiades I*, *Gorgias*, *Phaedo*, *Cratylus*, *Theaetetus*, *Sophist*, *Statesman*, *Phaedrus*, *Symposium*, and *Philebus*. After these come the *Timaeus* and *Parmenides*, seen as discussions of all that is within heaven and all that is beyond it respectively. Proclus' own commentaries on *Alcibiades I*, *Cratylus*, *Timaeus*, and *Parmenides* are at least partially extant, as are the commentaries of others on *Gorgias*, *Phaedo*, *Phaedrus*, and *Philebus*.<sup>10</sup>

We are also told (26.45–58) that some afforded a place to the teaching of *Republic* and *Laws*, and Marinus (V. *Procl.* § 14) talks about Proclus' having mastered politics through these works and through Aristotle's *Politics*. Proclus wrote what is known as a *Commentary on the Republic*, but it is not a running commentary of the usual type and resembles rather a collection of essays, suggesting a different teaching format (assuming that the work was intended as a teaching aid). There is in fact no evidence for any traditional commentary on the *Republic* or *Laws* from antiquity (Tarrant 2012).

Two features need to be stressed with regard to a Proclean curriculum in particular. First, it was not just Aristotle and Plato that could be studied under him, for his mathematical works include an extant *Commentary on book 1 of Euclid's Elements*. Further, there are fragments of a commentary on the *Chaldaean Oracles*, on Plotinus (presumably a selection), on Hesiod's *Works and Days*, and on the Orphic *Theogony*.<sup>11</sup> These commentaries, and other exegetical works that included two on Homer, suggest that these authors could be studied under him. Indeed, a work like the *Commentary on the Timaeus* assumes that readers have extensive knowledge of Homer, Orpheus, and the *Chaldaean Oracles*.

Second, the Platonic *Parmenides* is seen as the pinnacle of all learning, and the principal Platonic source for a highly complex theology, neatly tabulated by the Editors of this volume in Appendix I. While we know that the second part of the *Parmenides* had long been thought to conceal a deeper meaning, and that the dialogue's place in the curriculum had been assured since Iamblichus, Proclus' own successor seems to have taken a very different view of the work, and it is difficult to determine whether Ammonius and Olympiodorus paid anything more than lip-service to its place in the curriculum. Indeed, the anonymous *Prolegomena*, though it presents the Iamblichan

view that the *Parmenides* is the theological pinnacle of the curriculum (26.21), sees Plato as choosing the ‘grand’ (ἀδρὸς) style for theological dialogues (17.3–6), while Proclus (*in Parm.* I 646.1–21) had lauded Plato for writing the *Parmenides* in the very opposite style, known as ‘lean’ (ἰσχνός). It is in the *Timaeus*, with the whole of nature as its subject matter, including but not confined to the divinities pertaining to this world, that Proclus finds the ‘grand’ style (*in Tim.* I 7.18–8.13; III 200.1, etc.). Proclus himself could never have related the grand style to theological writings in general, and this indicates how far the *Parmenides* has slipped from view when the *Prolegomena* was written (perhaps up to a century later).

#### 2.4. THE LIMITS OF PROCLUS’ OWN PERSPECTIVE

Hence, Proclus is of pivotal importance in the Platonic thought of late antiquity. Across the philosophic curriculum, he speaks with a confidence never matched in his successors. Subsequent authors of Platonic commentaries, although they sometimes disagree with him, nevertheless treat him with respect, while Christian philosophers such as Philoponus see him as their key target. His own Platonic commentaries on the two ‘perfect’ dialogues of the curriculum, the *Timaeus* and the *Parmenides*, regularly consider earlier views, for example, those of Porphyry and Iamblichus, while giving pride of place to Proclus’ own revered teacher Syrianus. The vision of Syrianus underlies much of Proclus’ work, and it was Syrianus’ own practice to harvest the insights of both Porphyry and Iamblichus, often steering a course between these two notorious rivals.<sup>12</sup> Proclus’ response to Syrianus’ interpretation seems much more sophisticated and exacting than that of Syrianus’ less famous pupil Hermias (in his *Commentary on the Phaedrus*), but this was probably due to Syrianus’ ability to adapt material to the needs of especially gifted pupils, and even to be led to greater insights by them. It might be best to regard Hermias’ commentary and Proclus’ early *Commentary on the Timaeus* as the products of fruitful interaction between master and pupil. Certainly, it cannot be assumed that Hermias is no more than a passive recorder of Syrianus, while Proclus was always looking for new advances and refinements, however much his modifications were founded upon Syrianus’ principles.

While the commentaries give the impression that Proclus’ three key predecessors are Porphyry, Iamblichus, and Syrianus, the *Platonic Theology*, an equally exegetical work (though involving several dialogues), opens with Proclus’ picture of the history of true Platonic initiation (I 1, 6.16–7.8).<sup>13</sup> One should remember that this is the introduction to a *theological* study, and that the list is therefore not so much a list of quality philosophers as of

philosophic high priests: those engendered beings who have risen to knowledge of higher things. This he saw as *Platonic* knowledge insofar as all such knowledge was mediated through Plato. The penetrative insights into the divine available to the founder are assumed to have died out for centuries, before being resurrected with Plotinus and reinforced by Syrianus. In between, he affirms that those insights were also available to Amelius, Porphyry, Iamblichus, and Theodorus of Asine. All these are mentioned in the Platonic commentaries, but one might not have anticipated such prominence for Plotinus' close colleague Amelius and the enigmatic fourth-century figure Theodorus: perhaps not even for Plotinus, whose works were more concerned with solutions to philosophic problems than with scholarly exegesis. However, Proclus lists these predecessors partly on the basis of their perceived access to the divine. This is well documented for Plotinus (Porphyry, *V. Plot.* § 23), making him a natural member of any Platonic *thiasos*.

After Plotinus, at least one philosopher exercised a defining influence over Proclus' Platonic interpretation without appearing among the initiates, for Plutarch of Athens took a new direction in the interpretation of the *Parmenides*, was the forerunner of Syrianus, and taught Proclus in person.<sup>14</sup> Perhaps Plutarch and his predecessor 'from Rhodes'<sup>15</sup> had been somewhat cautious and 'sane' in their embrace of the Neoplatonists' ever-growing love of multiple divine entities, since his lasting achievement had the effect of limiting to five the number of metaphysical levels required to explain the exercises that Parmenides had presented in that dialogue. Sanity, while the source of respect, would count against one's inclusion in any Bacchic band of inspired Platonists.<sup>16</sup>

Hence, we should not take the *Platonic Theology* as the sole guide to Proclus' place in the wider Platonic tradition, for he was far more than an inspired theologian as recent studies of his scientific and mathematical views (Siorvanes 1996; Martijn 2010a) have shown and as this volume will document. Furthermore, there are doubts about how precise an authority Proclus could be concerning the growth of the Platonic tradition, for it is unclear how much of his material on minor predecessors is drawn from personal acquaintance with their writings and how much stems from repetitions within the commentary tradition, preserved over generations.<sup>17</sup> A key concern is that philosophers personally known to Porphyry are mentioned with disproportionate frequency in the first book of Proclus' *in Timaeum*, suggesting that memory of his acquaintances was kept alive within the commentary tradition. Earlier Platonists whose commentaries were read in Plotinus' school may also have had their views regularly recorded by Porphyry, making their views *seem* familiar to his successors. Other material might have derived from the scholarly Plutarch of Athens, who is said to have 'articulated clearly all the rather confused contributions of earlier commentators' (Procl., *in Parm.* VI 1061.18–20),<sup>18</sup> or from Syrianus' reports of Plutarch's scholarship.

Hence, while it is important to know where Proclus places himself in the Platonic tradition, it is equally important to consider independently what might be said of his relationship to various key developments in the history of Platonism before his day and, where appropriate, the ways in which Platonism had come to develop a tolerance not only of non-Platonic viewpoints but also of the more philosophically respectable religious systems from across the known world.

## 2.5. THE COMMENTARY TRADITION FROM PRE-PLOTINIAN TIMES

One consequence of the growth of a reading public in early imperial times is the importance of the commentary tradition within the schools. There is today increasing scholarly interest in the philosophic commentary, most notably commentaries on Plato and Aristotle.<sup>19</sup> Proclus himself treats Crantor of Soli, a prominent Academic of the late fourth and early third century BC, as the first *interpreter* (whether of the *Timaeus* alone or of Plato generally),<sup>20</sup> and he certainly explained some parts of that text in detail.<sup>21</sup> However, the early imperial age saw the production of a number of commentary-like writings called *hypomnēmata* (literally ‘reminders’) on dialogues of Plato, perhaps beginning with the work of the professed ‘Eclectic’ Potamo of Alexandria,<sup>22</sup> who is said in the *Suda* to have written *Hypomnēmata on the Republics* (sic! Tarrant 2012), during the reign of Augustus. The earliest commentary on a work of Plato of which much survives is the anonymous *Commentary on the Theaetetus*, partially preserved on papyrus up to 157d and of disputed date (but not later than about AD 150). The didactic tone is evidence that commentaries belonged within Platonist schools, and it may sometimes have been the pupil who put them in writing rather than the teacher, as in later times. However, the anonymous author cites other commentaries that he has written, with which auditors are expected to be familiar, and there may have been a demand for the personal *hypomnēmata* of the most respected teachers.

There are occasional references to second-century commentaries in much later authors. According to Porphyry (*V. Plot.* § 14), the works of several ‘Platonists’, such as Severus, Cronius, Numenius,<sup>23</sup> Gaius, or Atticus, and Aristotelians, such as Aspasius, Alexander, and Adrastus, were read in the school of Plotinus, and even in Proclus one often receives the impression that key questions had been treated by successive generations of commentators going back sometimes well beyond Porphyry. Each generation reconsidered answers offered to the traditional *aporiai* in its teacher’s commentaries, trying to refine or modify them. This ensured that the overall tradition was

maintained without dictating that answers remain fixed. An enduring tradition could thus adapt its philosophy within the limits imposed by the text itself.

## 2.6. HOW IMPORTANT AND HOW 'MAINSTREAM' WAS PLOTINUS?

Plotinus is often given the credit for being the founder of 'Neoplatonism', and he is either revered or respected by almost all Platonists who followed. However, neither he nor his followers thought of him as founding anything new. Admittedly, it was a critical rather than a slavish reading that Plotinus gave the earlier commentators who were read in his school, but in his response to them he is said to have followed the methods of his teacher Ammonius. Later in the *Life of Plotinus* (§§ 20–1) Porphyry reports Longinus' view of Plotinus,<sup>24</sup> which sees him working in the same tradition of Pythagorizing Platonism<sup>25</sup> as Thrasyllus, Moderatus, Numenius, and Cronius, but achieving a greater degree of precision. Given that Longinus is cited in a passage that sets out to absolve Plotinus of charges of being heavily indebted to Numenius (§ 17),<sup>26</sup> it would seem that Porphyry would not deny that Plotinus stemmed from this branch of the Platonic tradition, only that he made no advances on Numenius and that he thought similarly on all questions of importance.

Hence, Plotinus was not a product of a single established Platonic tradition. He belonged rather to Platonism's Pythagorean wing, and it is to Numenius (*as opposed to* Albinus, Atticus, and Severus) that he was seen as a kind of successor. Even more obviously, he belonged to a different tradition from (a) Galen whose scientific Platonism involved a relatively sceptical attitude to 'religious' questions, and (b) Longinus himself, whose wide-ranging (if rather unphilosophical) teachings included detailed interpretation of the *Timaeus*.<sup>27</sup> If I evaluate the evidence correctly, Longinus was a literalist, reluctant to detect unnecessary hidden meanings behind Plato's words. Numenius, however, preferred deep interpretation, finding hints of complex theology at *Timaeus* 39e (Fr. 22 = Procl., *in Tim.* III 103.28–32), seeing the Atlantis story as an allegory about souls (Fr. 37), and standing with Cronius at the head of a tradition that understood Homer's Cave of the Nymphs symbolically (Frr. 30–3). If one had followed the literalist tradition, then the purpose of commentary would have remained, as for the anonymous *Theaetetus* commentator, little more than explaining the words of Plato's speakers in rather more familiar terms and correcting a few erroneous interpretations.

Allowing oneself to find deeper meanings behind puzzling passages of Plato resulted in greater freedom to pursue satisfying philosophic solutions to the issues without having to contradict the author directly. In contemporary



scholarship that freedom is to some extent offered by rejecting the notion that any character serves simply as Plato's 'mouthpiece', something equally problematic for different reasons in Proclus, so that the true voice of Plato must be somehow recovered from behind the interchange of ideas, often comparing other passages from the same dialogue or from comparable ones. Respect was (and still is) only forthcoming for solutions that have enough philosophic appeal to match the hallowed status of the text. In order to set itself apart from religious competitors, Platonism needed to pursue freely conclusions satisfying one's reason, avoiding too scriptural an approach but allowing that the original author had some deep and worthwhile message.

Again, in order to offer genuine competition to religion, philosophy needed to promote a genuine philosophic life and a deep understanding of those truths for which humanity sought. The insights of Plato were reconfirmed by the teacher from within, as it were. Plotinus could proudly wear the badge of a philosopher as opposed to a *philologos*, which is famously how he regarded Longinus. This latter term suggests too superficial a response to discourse. A *philologos* did not compete with religions, since he offered no path to personal enlightenment or salvation. Plotinus did so, living a life profoundly influenced by his understanding of the natural and supernatural worlds. So did figures like Porphyry and Iamblichus who were also major influences on Proclus. The Platonists' difficulties with Byzantine authorities during and after Proclus' time would arise from the fact that they offered direct competition to the church, understanding both their favoured texts and their inner experiences in radically pre-Christian ways.

Commitment to a philosophy that would change one's life, though scarcely foreign to Platonism and its Socratic origins, was particularly associated with Pythagoreanism. It is thus no surprise that many saw Numenius, best understood as a Pythagorean, as a source of the particular brand of Platonizing thought that Plotinus promoted. His pupil Porphyry went on to write a *Life of Pythagoras* and a treatise about dietary prohibitions. Pythagoreanism would underlie much of Iamblichus' philosophical programme, and, since Iamblichus' Platonist curriculum culminated in two dialogues with significant mathematical content, where the chief speakers would come to be viewed as 'Pythagoreans', the *Timaeus* and the *Parmenides*, it seems almost as if a nominally 'Pythagorean' philosophy was given pride of place for as long as that curriculum remained in use, well beyond the time of Proclus.

Hence, though the subsequent history of Greek Platonism is such that the emphasis between the third and fifth centuries now naturally falls upon the contributions made by Plotinus, Porphyry, Iamblichus, Syrianus, and Proclus, and though Proclus himself habitually thinks of such a chain of development, the Platonism that Plotinus promoted was not in its day 'mainstream'. That 27-year-old Plotinus chose Ammonius Saccas as his teacher in preference to

more highly regarded instructors at Alexandria, and had a desire for eastern wisdom as well as Greek (*V. Plot.* § 3),<sup>28</sup> almost guarantee that his expectations of philosophy had from the beginning been unusual. Plotinus' difference from the scholarly wing of Platonism is well brought out by Longinus' remarks in Porphyry (*V. Plot.* § 20). Some scholars 'did little more than compile or transcribe what had been composed by predecessors', while others simply amplified minor parts of traditional topics. New visions were at a premium.

On the other hand, Plotinus remained unwilling to take as many steps in a religious direction as others of broadly Platonist persuasion. The Gnostic treatises *Allogenes*, *Zostrianos*, *Three Steles of Seth*, and *Marsanes*, known to us in the Nag Hammadi Coptic versions, bear witness to a Platonizing tradition of Sethian Gnosticism that has several parallels in the works of Plotinus and Porphyry (see Turner 2001). Much debate has resulted because Plotinus and his school attacked the influence of Gnostics promoting revelations of Zostrianos and *Allogenes* (*V. Plot.* § 16). If the Nag Hammadi texts bearing these names are translations of the texts criticized by Plotinus (*Enn.* II 9 [33] etc.), Amelius, and Porphyry, then some of their key doctrines would seem to have a prehistory in Platonizing Gnosticism in which Plato was thought to express only limited truth. Rather than see alien elements in the background of Neoplatonism, some scholars postulate a plurality of recensions of the offending Gnostic treatises, so that the Coptic texts could translate versions influenced by Plotinus and Porphyry rather than preceding them.<sup>29</sup> While not denying that this is possible, I regard such a position as special pleading. The reason why these Gnostics needed to be countered by Plotinus' school is that they were in competition, and that superficial similarities might make casual observers suppose them deeply related.

In this context we may consider the provenance of the anonymous *Commentary on Plato's Parmenides*, which Hadot (1968) attributed to Porphyry on the basis of interesting, if not compelling, similarities, shared also with Marius Victorinus. The fact that these similarities recur in the Platonizing Sethian treatises suggests that there may be a chapter in the history of *Parmenides* interpretation that remained unknown to Proclus. Little was more essential to mainstream Neoplatonic exegesis than a metaphysical/theological interpretation of the various 'hypotheses' of the *Parmenides*, referring them to different metaphysical levels. Such interpretation of the first three hypotheses is found in Plotinus (*Enn.* V 1 [10] 8), but whether it arrived earlier has been a matter of controversy since Dodds (1928). Metaphysical interpretations detailed in Proclean exegesis are those of Porphyry, Iamblichus, and Syrianus, supplemented occasionally by Amelius, Theodorus of Asine, the 'philosopher from Rhodes', and Plutarch of Athens. Certainty is elusive because Proclus became reluctant to name previous commentators in later exegetical works, but I suspect that the *Commentary on the Parmenides* betrays signs that Proclus too was unsure of the precise history of this dialogue's interpretation,

being reliant on the scholarship of Plutarch of Athens, which may also have been less than explicit.<sup>30</sup>

## 2.7. ALLEGORY AND THE RECEPTION OF THE ORPHIC, HOMERIC, AND CHALDAEAN TRADITIONS

Vital to Proclus' exegetical armoury is allegorical interpretation, which helps him to bring in Homer, Orpheus, and the Oracles as potential support for his interpretation of Plato.<sup>31</sup> I would rate Numenius here as a more important influence than Plotinus. Proclus occasionally treats Numenius' influence on lesser insightful figures like Amelius and Theodorus as a cause for suspicion, without actually engaging in anti-Numenian polemic since Numenius' importance for Plotinus and Porphyry cannot easily be denied.<sup>32</sup> Proclus' desire to make Plotinus the real visionary is presumably inherited from Porphyry, whose commentaries he employed on a regular basis. Plotinus was the philosopher to whom Porphyry felt deeply indebted, and one problem with Numenius might have been that his philosophy acted as a catalyst for a new wave of sub-philosophical literature claiming insights into the ancient wisdom of diverse peoples, including some strands of Gnosticism. He therefore remained an ambivalent figure, unable to be given Porphyry's imprimatur and perhaps poorly understood by Proclus. Numenius' influence was primarily methodological, not doctrinal.

Those who read the Platonic commentaries of Proclus will be struck by the number of references to 'the theologian' (= Orpheus), 'the poet' (= Homer), and the (Chaldaean) Oracles.<sup>33</sup> The more familiar one becomes with this material, the more seamless the interweaving of theologies and cosmologies appears. Other similar materials may be introduced, but the fact is that, following his master Syrianus, Proclus undertook to explain and revere not one body of texts but at least four. While one occasionally feels that he is led astray by these extra-Platonic loyalties, it is remarkable, given Proclus' normal principles of interpretation, how far most Platonic exegesis is intelligible with reference to the Platonic text(s) alone. A synthetic mind was required to reconcile different traditions, coupled with a willingness to dig beyond the literal meaning of the text, something easier with poetic texts than with prose.

As for the *Chaldaean Oracles*, Porphyry had written a work on how genuine philosophy could be extracted from oracles, *De philosophia ex oraculis haurienda*. It may be that some Chaldaean material was presented here, as it certainly was elsewhere in Porphyry,<sup>34</sup> and it is a remarkable achievement that these Oracles were the subject of exegesis only a century or so after they had been written, most probably in the environment of Numenius.<sup>35</sup>

Platonists mistook this for an ancient text, failing to connect the ease with which it was interpreted Platonically with its being composed under Platonizing influence. Granting such a text scriptural status had the effect of reinforcing the links between Platonism and theurgic practices in Iamblichus, Syrianus, and Proclus.

The accommodating attitude to Homer can be traced back to the same period. At the very beginning of Greek literature, Homer became important in the fight to defend Greek traditions. However, because of Plato's perceived attacks on Homer in *Republic* II, III, and X any defence had to explain away features criticized by Plato: chiefly the depiction of the mythical gods and heroes. While the allegorical interpretation of Homer had been known for centuries, a new beginning was made for Platonism by Numenius and Cronius in the second century AD, following the accommodating attitude towards Homer and Egyptian mythology in Plutarch of Chaeronea. In Numenius (Fr. 32) Homer is reported to have referred to the tropics of Cancer and Capricorn as 'Gates of the Sun' (cf. *Od.* 24.12). Odysseus himself (Fr. 33) was thought to symbolize 'the person who passes through successive generations, and in this position escapes to those who are beyond every wave and inexperienced of the sea.' Here Numenius appeals to *Odyssey* 11.122–3, and to the claim that Plato too used terms for the sea to refer to the material conglomerate. From Numenius (Fr. 31) and Cronius Porphyry took his idea of writing an allegorizing work on the cosmic symbolism of the Cave of the Nymphs in *Odyssey* 13.

Numenius and Porphyry extended this approach to other authors besides Homer. The pseudo-Galenic, and probably Porphyrian, work *On How Embryos are Animated* informs us of a group who held that soul and sperm were deposited simultaneously, including 'Numenius [Fr. 36] and those who explain the hidden meanings (*huponoias*) of Pythagoras, and interpret Plato's "River of Forgetfulness" (*Resp.* X 621a), the "Styx" in Homer and the Orphic [writings], and Pherecydes' "efflux" (71B7 DK) as references to sperm' (*Ad Gaurum* 2.2.7–10). Diehl also sees Pherecydes (71B4 DK) as relevant to the 'old theologians' in Proclus' report of Porphyrian (and by implication Numenian) views on the challenges facing the descending soul, as seen in the Myth of Atlantis (*in Tim.* I 77.15), and the wider context (*in Tim.* I 76.30–77.23) shows Proclus to be very much aware that Numenius and Porphyry adopted strikingly similar allegorizing interpretations of the Atlantis story.

Both the pseudo-Galenic passage and the Atlantis passage (which refers to the ancient theological tale of Dionysus and the Titans) confirm Numenius' as well as Porphyry's interest in Orphic themes.<sup>36</sup> The Orphic dimension would become vital to Proclus' Platonism. He is convinced that Plato and Orpheus celebrated the same Creator-god (*in Tim.* I 317.18–19).<sup>37</sup> At III 228.12–15 Orpheus' bringing about creation by placing 'the intellective nature within Zeus' is compared with Plato's deriving divine and creative principles from the

Father. Further, in discussing the divisible and indivisible essences, Proclus (*in Tim.* II 145.4–146.22) introduces the Orphic myth of Dionysus' dismemberment, including the undivided intellective heart and the division of the limbs into seven. This leads to the remarkable claim that Plato, at *Timaeus* 35a–b, was 'following the Orphic myths and desiring to be virtually an interpreter of the things that were being cast in secret terms'. According to Proclus, Plato responds to a developed but secretive theological tradition, fundamentally Orphic.

Given the importance of allegory for their project, all Neoplatonists, including Proclus (*in Tim.* I 129.11–130.9), had to respond to seemingly anti-allegorical passages in Plato such as *Phaedrus* 229c, where Plato rejects physicalist interpretations of myths on the ground that they are a waste of time that might be better spent 'knowing oneself'. In Hermias' exegesis (*in Phdr.* 30.10–31.2 Couvreur = 32.15–33.10 Lucarini–Moreschini) it is argued that Plato did not think all allegory a waste of effort, but believed rather that myths should actually reveal higher things in particular: thus *contributing* to self-knowledge. This position on allegory agrees with the allegorical interpretations of both Porphyry and Numenius, which tended to detect an inner or psychic meaning rather than a physical one, and gave it cosmic rather than individual significance. Proclus' response also emphasizes this cosmic significance, which he evidently associates with Egyptian wisdom (*in Tim.* I 130.1–4).

## 2.8. HERMENEUTIC CONSTRAINTS

We have seen how Numenius and Porphyry were influential in applying allegorical interpretation widely enough to reconcile Platonism with a variety of religious texts and authors, both non-Greek and pre-Platonic, and how this was taken up and developed by Proclus. But a new belief that religious literature required philosophical *decoding* was always likely to produce new philosophically *encoded* revelatory discourses. This is one way of understanding the *Chaldaean Oracles* and the Platonizing Gnostic texts, to name but a few of those that pretended antiquity and yet were often believed to be recent. Allegory, used appropriately, was welcomed, but it needed to be controlled. Perpetual appeals to allegorical interpretation could lead to a lack of discipline in exegesis. Decoding requires rules if it is not to be abused, for otherwise there is little that cannot be read into a text.

In Proclus the exegetical process is controlled by the fact that a single system must be found in all inspired authors, including all major texts of Plato. Moreover, it is to be found throughout each major dialogue. Discipline and precision is required if he is to be satisfied. In the texts of Plotinus few checks

and balances had been in place, with isolated passages of Plato referred to and less attention paid to precision on hermeneutical questions than on philosophical ones. Porphyry was a scholar from the beginning, and he seems to have insisted on developing interpretations of whole dialogues, including their prologues, which he regularly interpreted as illustrating proper behaviour in philosophic matters. Already the *Parmenides* was beginning to compete in canonical status with the *Timaeus*, but no fixed curriculum existed. Interest in new revelatory texts was balanced by a profound respect for Aristotle. Furthermore, Porphyry saw myths primarily as a vehicle for teaching about souls, i.e. as an aid to self-knowledge, if I correctly interpret Hermias,<sup>38</sup> and this assumption limited his exegesis.

Iamblichus favoured interpreting myths in a cosmic or universal sense, this being but one of the ways in which he marks a crucial step towards Proclus. He also afforded a wider role to religious practices, including theurgy, than Porphyry had done, supposing them to have a role for the intellective soul as well as non-rational faculties, better reconciling the priestly with the philosophical (Smith 1974: 122–41). The role of the oracular had similarly been more constrained under Porphyry than in Iamblichus (Smith 1974: 140). Finally, the embrace of the Homeric and even Hesiodic pantheon as part of theology proper (rather than as the poor relation of philosophy) became marked in Iamblichus, and it is noticeable that, where the *Timaeus* (40e–41a) briefly and perhaps dismissively sketches a response to received theology, Proclus (*in Tim.* III 162.1–194.15) fails to say anything explicitly about Porphyry's position<sup>39</sup> but reports only the seemingly extravagant positions of Iamblichus, Theodorus of Asine, and Syrianus. Interpreters were by now constrained by a new requirement to link everything within a dialogue to its principal purpose, so that all the *Timaeus* has cosmic significance in Iamblichus and theological significance in Syrianus. Plato's teaching on the traditional divinities would thus become a serious lesson about encosmic gods.

Iamblichus demanded that the totality of a dialogue should be directed to a single goal related to his formalization of the curriculum, fixing twelve dialogues that needed reconciling by the Platonist interpreter, following Aristotle's *organon* as essential preliminary reading—for the rational had to be in place before the supra-rational.<sup>40</sup> Requirements of unity within dialogues were tightened, so that each had to display the same perfect order as the cosmos. Every part of every dialogue contributed to the same *skopos* or 'target', and it was no longer acceptable to postulate ethical aims here and physical aims there. Iamblichus tightened the requirements for interpreting Platonic myths, so that a literal meaning could not be dismissed even though a deeper meaning was present. One should not overturn the surface meaning entirely.<sup>41</sup> Furthermore, by regularly responding to comments of his predecessors, however polemically, he ensured the preservation of contrasting views and the systematic improvement of earlier answers. Syrianus continued in this vein

by systematically contrasting the views of Porphyry and Iamblichus and attempting to mediate between them.

Hence, by Proclus' time, exegesis was a task requiring considerable discipline and could not easily result in unbridled speculation that strayed from the text under consideration. Proclus attempted to be even more systematic and 'scientific' than his predecessors, even when tackling subjects that we should not today think susceptible to scientific treatment, as in the *Elements of Theology*. Together with the need for religious insights and enlightenment came the commitment to working within a system and getting all the details right. Commentators since Porphyry had benefited from the need to oppose their less restrained rivals and to prepare hermeneutic principles that their hearers could understand. Proclus relished this task, making exegesis the foundation of a monumental vision of the world, its governance, and our place within it. Proclus, in spite of initial appearances, was as disciplined a thinker as any from antiquity.

## NOTES

1. A good example of the plural is to be found in the title of Cleary (1999).
2. On the fundamental tenets of Platonism as a systematic philosophy, see Ch. 3 in this volume.
3. I traced some of these issues across several centuries in Tarrant (2005), but see now Helmig (2012).
4. See Karamanolis (2006) and Sedley (2012).
5. The most striking exception is Atticus in the second century AD, whose fragments can be found in des Places (1977).
6. See in particular Gerson (2005).
7. See Steel (2003b, 2005b) and, more briefly, Steel (2010: 633).
8. On this question see Rappe (2000: 212; 2010: 35).
9. The *Isagoge* and a catechist commentary on this work survive, as do extensive fragments of a huge *Commentary to Gedaleius*; some now regard Porphyry as author of a further commentary part extant in the Archimedes Palimpsest.
10. For the ethical relevance of this curriculum, see Ch. 13 in this volume.
11. For Proclus' works see Gerson (2010: ii. 957–8) and Appendix II in this volume.
12. See Klitenic Wear (2011: 4).
13. On this passage see Buckley (2006).
14. It may be that the 'philosopher from Rhodes' who influenced Plutarch in his interpretation of the *Parmenides* was exercising no less an influence. Strange (2007: 103) writes that 'In particular we do not know anything about Plutarch's philosophical background. Proclus' text in fact rather clearly suggests the possibility that the Philosopher from Rhodes was one of Plutarch's teachers. If so, he should count as a rather major historical figure.'

15. To correct 'Rhodes' to 'Asine' in the text of *in Parm.* VI 1057.6, as Steel (2009: 25) has done, rejects philological principles in favour of historical speculation.
16. The incompatibility of divine inspiration and human sanity is argued in an important passage of Plato's *Timaeus* 71e3–73b5; interestingly, Plato talks of the *interpretation* of inspired utterance as being the privilege of the sane.
17. See Dillon (1977: 187–8, 251, 254, 327, 359); also on Plutarch, Rescigno (1998), Opsomer (2001a); on Numenius, Tarrant (2004); on interpretations of *Parmenides*, Strange (2007), who concludes 'But perhaps . . . it just indicates how limited a source Proclus actually is' (108).
18. The context suggests that this applies principally to interpreters of the *Parmenides*, though strong interests in the history of interpretation are unlikely to have been confined to one dialogue.
19. See Sedley (1997b), Adamson et al. (2004), and the Ancient Commentaries on Aristotle project run by Richard Sorabji.
20. See *in Tim.* I 76.1; in Tarrant (2013) I have suggested that Crantor may have also written an interpretative work devoted to the *Theaetetus*, noting that it was one of the earliest dialogues to have attracted exegesis.
21. Plutarch uses Crantor often in *De animae procreatione*.
22. In fact, it is quite likely that Potamo's 'commentary' had been preceded by one by Eudorus of Alexandria on the *Timaeus*, but fragments in Plutarch do not confirm such a title and his Eudoran source might have been confined to quite a small proportion of the *Timaeus*, whether or not it should be regarded as *hypomnemata*.
23. Numenius is usually known as a Pythagorean, but the context is such that any sympathetic interpreter of Plato is liable to be called a 'Platonic'.
24. Professor O'Meara kindly points out that Longinus must have based his opinion only on the early treatises, but Porphyry's response suggests no significant change of direction.
25. The main task of this philosophy seemed to Longinus to be the explanation of the first principles of Pythagorean philosophy, which its adherents (but not Longinus apparently) attributed to Plato as well.
26. The charges are interesting and appear to have seen Plotinus as a feeble imitator. In this case it seems likely that the detractors were elevating Numenius above Plotinus, and so acknowledging their own admiration for him. Numenius' influence at the time can scarcely be doubted, since though devoted to Plotinus Amelius also devoted much attention to interpreting his rather cryptic writings, and he was found in Numenius' native Apamea at the time of Plotinus' death.
27. Tarrant (2007: 36, 74–6).
28. One is reminded of Numenius' policy of supplementing Greek thought with ideas from the Egyptians, Jews, Magi, and Brahmans (Fr. 1a), though even Plutarch had made much use of Egyptian and Persian themes.
29. Most eloquently by Majercik (2005). A very different position is now defended by Mazur (2010).
30. See Tarrant (1993: 148–77) and *in Parm.* VI 1061.18–20.
31. On Proclus' use of allegory, see also Ch. 14 in this volume.
32. That his influence on Porphyry's treatment of Atlantis was stronger than Porphyry would have admitted is implied by Proclus at *in Tim.* I 77.22–3.



33. For Proclus' understanding and use of these theological traditions see Ch. 10 in this volume.
34. Fragmentary evidence dealing with the second God makes it clear that the *Oracles* were in fact interpreted by Porphyry; see Athanassiadi (2005: 138 n. 10).
35. The principal thesis of Athanassiadi (2005). The recipient of the *Oracles* was one Julian the Chaldaean.
36. Numenius' use of Orpheus is no surprise. As a Pythagorean, he had no motives for attributing authority in the Greek tradition to Plato rather than Pythagoras, Homer, or Orpheus. He finds cosmic symbolism in Parmenides (B1.11; Fr. 31.27–8), as well as in Pythagoras, who allegedly referred to souls collecting at the Milky Way by the phrase 'People of Dreams' (Fr. 35). Numenius seeks a single ancient wisdom, common to many Greeks down to classical times. A credibly Orphic idea in the *Phaedo* (62b; cf. *Cratylus* 400c) is that of the soul's earthly prison, which symbolized pleasure for Numenius (Fr. 38).
37. Cf. *in Tim.* I 318.25–6, which includes the *Chaldaean Oracles*, and refers to the same 'maker and father'.
38. On *Phaedrus* 229b–230b, where there are two separate interpretations of the Boreas and Oreithuia myth (229b), which are then somehow combined. The first (*in Phdr.* 28.13–24 Couvreur = 30.14–26 Lucarini–Moreschini) is 'ethical' (a term hinting at Porphyry) and regards Oreithuia as a priestess of Boreas, who was *seized* by him in the sense of being inspired, perhaps thinking of the Muses' inspiration at 245a, which 'takes over a tender and unsullied soul' (a2); the second (28.24–29.10 C. = 30.27–31.14 L.–M.) is 'universal' (hinting at Iamblichus), but not such as to exclude the first (28.25–6 C. = 30.27–8 L.–M.). Here Boreas becomes divine providence coming *down* upon the fertile land, thereby causing it to turn upwards. Hermias (29.11–26 C. = 31.15–30 L.–M.) gives precedence to the psychological, albeit in the context of the general thrust of the universal interpretation.
39. But Porphyry must be included among the 'ancient interpreters' of whom 'some connected his account of them with myth, some with the ancestral rites of cities, some with guardian powers, some with moral teachings, and some with souls' (III 168.2–5). These were not mutually exclusive.
40. It is unclear how this related to Iamblichus' attempt to present a full account of the Pythagorean heritage, on which see O'Meara (1989), but note that Proclus still regards the two perfect dialogues, *Timaeus* and *Parmenides*, as essentially Pythagorean in nature.
41. For instance, Iamblichus' expectations would not allow one to suspend judgement on the issue of whether Plato postulated an afterlife in the *Gorgias*.

## Proclus' System

*Marije Martijn and Lloyd P. Gerson*

*σύστημα δὲ μονάδος καὶ δυάδος ἢ τριᾶς πρώτη.*

(Nicom., *Theol. arithm.* 17.17)

### 3.1. INTRODUCTION: SYSTEM

According to widespread consensus, Proclus surpassed his predecessors in his great powers of systematization.<sup>1</sup> But what do we mean by 'systematization'? What was Proclus' motivation for systematizing? What is the core of his system? And what elements of his thought contribute most to its systematic nature? These are the main questions that will be addressed in this chapter—questions that have not been addressed very much in the past, despite the fact that, as Werner Beierwaltes points out, the concept 'system' has been used as a characterization of Proclus' thought 'almost *ad nauseam*'. Such characterizations, however, are hardly ever accompanied by reflections on the meaning of the term and the justification of its use.<sup>2</sup>

We do not address this issue merely for the sake of justifying (or rejecting) the *epitheton*. Knowing in what sense Proclus is a systematic philosopher has consequences for the way we approach his texts.

Characterizations of Proclus' philosophy as 'systematic' in secondary literature usually approach the question from one of two main angles: they use either a general superlative that ascribes to Proclus' philosophy the highest degree of systematization or, more commonly, a specific superlative that ascribes to him the highest degree of being 'a systematizer'.<sup>3</sup> We will look at these qualities in a positive sense, but both are fairly often considered dubious. The first sense relates to the construction of a comprehensive whole of philosophical explanations (more on this in section 3.2). When taken

pejoratively, it is associated with importing needless complexity, primarily by letting the rules of the system override the principle of parsimony, common sense, and even the rules of logic. Proclus' henads have often been offered as a case in point. We will return to the negative connotations of this first sense (section 3.5).

Dodds' introduction to Proclus' *Elements of Theology*<sup>4</sup> portrays its author as a *mere* systematizer, i.e. someone who does no creative thinking of his own but takes the thought of previous thinkers and orders it into a coherent system.<sup>5</sup> This is the second sense of 'systematic' philosophy. Much, if not all, of Proclus' system can be traced back to Iamblichus or Syrianus.<sup>6</sup> In this second pejorative sense, then, the label 'system' pertains primarily, if not only, to the method of presentation. In this sense, it applies primarily to the *Elements of Theology*, which is hence often considered the epitome of systematization. It is clearly written and well-structured—principles<sup>7</sup> are followed by derived conclusions, each supported with argumentation, and nothing more: no endless discussions, for example, of alternative views or support from religious sources, as we find them in the commentaries. This aspect may well be the primary reason for the lasting reputation and influence of the *Elements of Theology* in the history of philosophy.

In section 3.2, we will introduce the concept of 'Ur-Platonism' as a useful heuristic framework for understanding Proclus' primary motivation for his adherence to and (further) development of a philosophical system and the main assumptions governing that system. In section 3.3, the longest of this chapter, we will set out the main elements of the system, starting from that 'most systematic' of Proclus' works, the *Elements of Theology*. In section 3.4, we will briefly discuss the epistemological and ethical background of the system. And finally, in the concluding section 3.5, we will address the downsides of systematization and determine which of the two senses of 'systematic' best describes Proclus.

Before we start, however, let us define what we take a philosophical 'system' to be:<sup>8</sup> it is the entirety of a philosophical theory that aims at explaining reality and is characterized by (1) *comprehensiveness*, (2) *coherence*, (3) *hierarchy*, (4) *a foundation*, and (5) *reductivism*.<sup>9</sup> Within *comprehensiveness*, we distinguish, on the one hand, the requirement of somehow including everything that can be known about the world (*comprehensiveness-1*)—or explaining all of reality. This also means covering all branches of philosophy. On the other hand, the term also suggests the inclusion of all previous religious and philosophical traditions (*comprehensiveness-2*).<sup>10</sup> This first aspect is most apparent in the syncretistic nature of a systematic philosophy. It does not, however, necessarily imply describing all of reality in *one systematic* work in the second sense of 'systematic'.<sup>11</sup> *Coherence* regards the reflection of the nature and structure of reality (or knowledge) in philosophical theory: the manner in which all parts of reality hang together in some meaningful way should somehow be reflected

in a systematic philosophical theory through its being a non-contradictory whole of parts.

Moreover, for the system to really explain, it has to have a *foundation*.<sup>12</sup> There are two sides to this *foundation*, namely, the metaphysical foundation of reality on the one hand (*foundation-1*) and the methodological foundation on the other (*foundation-2*). Any theory that explains reality has to have these two foundations: there has to be an ultimate explanation of reality, as well as a foundation of our thoughts and their exposition in a methodology or logic.<sup>13</sup> In principle, the way logical methods structure our thought and provide it with a foundation may be unrelated to the nature of the reality we try to explain—this is not so, of course, for Platonists. But not all systems have an explicit methodical foundation (*foundation-2*). One could say, for example, that in the Platonic dialogues such a foundation is found or made explicit only in a few places (e.g. in the descriptions of dialectic in *Republic* VI–VII, *Sophist*, etc.). *Foundation-2* is reflected in the structure of the exposition of the system (i.e. the second sense of ‘systematic’); *foundation-1* concerns the metaphysical and epistemological background of that system.

*Foundation*, and especially *foundation-1*, leads in turn to the necessity of reductivism and hierarchy. For a system to have explanatory power, it has to have a foundation, which in turn implies that its elements cannot be infinite—hence the necessity of a *reductivist* approach.<sup>14</sup> Moreover, as a consequence of *reductivism*, *coherence*, and *foundation*, the elements of the system have to be *hierarchically* ordered with as few principles as possible. To be *coherent*, moreover, this ordering has to have *continuity*.

To a great extent, albeit not entirely, these requirements fit the analysis presented by the father of the Hegelian notion of a ‘philosophical system’, Johann Jacob Brucker (1696–1770). His *Historia critica Philosophiae* contains some more or less explicit criteria for systematicity, three of which can be mapped onto ours: *comprehensiveness* (*comprehensiveness-1*), *coherence* (*coherence*), and *deduction from one or a few principles* (our *foundation*, *reductivism*, and *hierarchy* rolled into one).<sup>15</sup>

The main difference between Brucker’s analysis and ours is that we do not include *autonomy* with respect to—in the sense of separation from—non-philosophical disciplines, such as mathematics or theology, among the criteria. For thinkers who assume that all disciplines are ultimately subordinate to a first science—metaphysics in the Platonic tradition—such autonomy is not a *desideratum*.<sup>16</sup>

Hegel’s characterization of Proclus’ thought as systematic is probably the most famous. He praises Proclus for giving a more systematic and developed presentation of Platonic philosophy than Plotinus and for presenting an *Intellektualsystem* in his *Platonic Theology*.<sup>17</sup> Hegel’s notion of system differs from ours, primarily in that he speaks of a system of *development* (*System der Entwicklung der Idee*).<sup>18</sup> He means hereby a system of subsequent

philosophical systems (in Brucker's sense of the word), a philosophical development parallel to the universal development that is the unfolding of the *Weltgeist*.

### 3.2. UR-PLATONISM AS THE SOURCE OF SYSTEM

The primary motivation behind all Platonic philosophy, including Proclus', is to explain reality. To understand why this leads to building philosophical systems, we will use what Gerson calls *Ur-Platonism* (UP).<sup>19</sup> *Ur-Platonism* is a hypothetical framework for analysis, starting from the rejection of five existing positive philosophical positions that, according to Platonists, do not adequately explain the phenomena they are supposed to explain: not only bodies and their properties exist; physical causes cannot explain all phenomena; there are not only spatiotemporally distinct individuals; truth and good are not 'true/good for me' or 'for my group'; and knowledge is not impossible. The most famous formulation of these claims is probably the criticism of Presocratic and Sophistic doctrine in Socrates' intellectual biography (*Phaedo* 96a–102a).

The five negative claims or 'antis'<sup>20</sup> then form the starting point for elaborating a positive construct. The interesting fact about UP, for our present purposes, is that the search for ultimate explanations—which is its core—results in the positive construct of a philosophical 'system'. To explain reality, the construct has to be built on the basic requirements already mentioned:<sup>21</sup> the positive construct should consist of a set of philosophical claims that explain *all* of reality (*comprehensiveness*), while the explanations cannot be mutually contradictory or inconsistent (*coherence*). Real explanations are logically prior to what they explain (*hierarchy*),<sup>22</sup> which leads to the conclusion that there have to be ultimate explanations (*foundation*) and that these have to be as few in number as possible (*reductivism*).

One consequence of UP is that empirical data will not suffice for the system builders who adhere to it. They have to rely primarily on *speculation* to find true explanations. More importantly, they *can* rely on *speculation* in the sense of acquiring knowledge through pure or theoretical reason. In this case, the underlying assumptions are that reality itself obeys the above requirements (is coherent, etc.) and that thought is part of reality.

Possibly the most important finding of that systematic philosophical speculation is that the one way to fulfil the requirements while maintaining the 'antis' is through the hypothesis of a unique first principle. In other words, adherence to UP always involves the development of what is traditionally called a *philosophical system*, specifically with a single universal, immaterial, transcendent, absolute, knowable, ultimate principle as the foundation of everything.<sup>23</sup> So, although it was not until the eighteenth century that the

notion of 'systematic philosophy' was explicitly introduced and analysed, its roots do lie in ancient thought.

This all sounds fairly straightforward, but, in the elaboration of their positive construct, the heirs of Plato run into a major challenge: polarity.<sup>24</sup> As is evident from the analysis of the 'antis', real explanations are radically different from, and even opposite to, the *explananda*: the intelligible explains the sensible, the unitary explains the multitude, etc. For all pairs of opposites in the well-known 'Pythagorean' table of opposites,<sup>25</sup> one of the two in each pair is superior to the other—indicated by the fact that one of the pairs is 'good-bad', and (because this pair also applies to the table itself) everything in the same column as 'good' is hence superior to its partner in the 'bad' column. In Platonism, we see something similar: due to *hierarchy*, the *explananda*, i.e. the properties necessarily adhering to the natural world (plurality and division, change, perceptibility, spatiotemporality) are ontologically inferior to the explanation, i.e., their opposites (the unity, stability, intelligibility, and transcendence of the ultimate explanatory entity). So the combination of polarity with *hierarchy* results in ontological priority or 'vertical' ordering of one opposite over the other—and thereby the separation of one from the other. As a result, the natural world is disconnected from its own explanation—what is nowadays referred to as the problem of *chôrismos* (separation).<sup>26</sup> To solve this problem, then, the Platonic philosopher has to connect, not just very different entities, but polar opposites with each other: the many to the One, the sensible to the intelligible, the spatiotemporal to the non-spatiotemporal, and so on: 'the procession of beings has to be continuous and there should be no occurrence of empty space'.<sup>27</sup>

In elaborating their systems in line with UP, Platonist thinkers develop a number of interrelated strategies to tackle this problem of polarity. By Proclus' time, the negative side of UP is not very prominent, no doubt in part because there were few if any non-Platonists around. UP had long since become the unquestioned common ground of all philosophers, and Proclus' opponents, even the Christian ones, are all Platonists. Their differences almost exclusively concern the nature of the first principle and the implications for the first principle so understood for the solution of particular problems (e.g. the problems of evil, cognition, and matter). The main general problem inspiring both the particular problems and the different solutions, however, is that of polarity. A simple answer to the main question of this chapter might be that Proclus excels as a systematic philosopher because of the sheer amount of solutions to polarity he offers by combining earlier approaches.

Proclus starts from Plotinus' dynamic view of causality, in which the activity of the cause results in its effect *without* disconnecting from the cause.<sup>28</sup> And from Iamblichus Proclus takes further solutions which add structural elements to the theory of causality, reinforcing coherence through varieties of intermediacy: metaphysical triads, including what Dodds (1963: p. xii) calls the

‘doctrine of the mean’, and the notion of modes of being. The core of the system is the reduction of difference to a kind of sameness in a manner reminiscent of the reduction of not-being to a kind of being in Plato’s *Sophist* (257b3–4). We will illustrate how all this pans out in Proclus, starting with the *Elements of Theology*.

### 3.3. PROCLUS’ SYSTEM IN THE *ELEMENTS OF THEOLOGY*

The famous and influential *Elements of Theology* is not just Proclus’ most systematic work but also, when read with Dodds’ comments, ‘the best introduction to Proclus’ (Steel 2010: 637). In it, Proclus, ostensibly *more geometrico*—i.e. for educational purposes<sup>29</sup>—sets out the basic principles of the metaphysical structure of reality in 211 propositions, each followed by what looks like a demonstration or at least a supporting elaboration. This method of presentation mimics Euclid’s *Elements* in much more than its title. It does first, at the most general level, in the structural division of the subject matter into propositions followed by arguments. Second, it does this in more detail, within the propositions, again in structural elements (e.g. repetition of the proposition by way of conclusion, and the addition of corollaries), as well as in logical elements (e.g. the use of *reductio* arguments) and in formal elements (e.g. the use of phrases like *hoper edei deixai, quod erat demonstrandum*). Moreover, this mimicking is not just surface rhetoric. Rather, it is necessary for the work to fulfil its educational function and is made possible by—and reflects—the structure inherent in the philosophical system.<sup>30</sup>

Roughly the first half of the work (§§ 1–112) introduces the oppositions on which the system of metaphysics is built (see also Dodds 1963: p. x). To quote and expand on Dodds:

unity and plurality, cause and consequent, the unmoved, the self-moved and the passively mobile, transcendence and immanence, declension and continuity, procession and reversion, *causa sui* and *causatum*, [the imparticipable, the participated, and the participating], eternity and time, substance and reflection, whole and part, active and passive potency, limit and infinitude, being, life, and cognition.<sup>31</sup>

Some of these clusters describe fundamental opposite entities and properties populating the system, while others refer to metaphysical principles or processes governing their being and relations and involving some kind of polarity.

In the second half of the *Elements of Theology*, the oppositions and principles are elaborated in the hierarchical structure of real causes subsequent to the One: the henads (§§ 113–65), intellects (§§ 166–83), and souls (§§ 184–211).<sup>32</sup> Within each of these subsections of the second half, the

propositions are more or less ordered from the ontologically prior to the ontologically posterior.<sup>33</sup> For example, the first proposition on henads (§ 113) discusses the primary property of the transcendent henads or gods, i.e. unity resulting from their immediate 'cause', the One; the last four (§§ 162–5) regard the participated henads, i.e. the intelligible, intellectual, hypercosmic, and encosmic ones. The first two propositions about intellects (§§ 166–7) concern the hierarchy of the unparticipated primary intellect and the subsequent participated intellects, whereas the last three (§§ 181–3) describe only the participated ones (in between are propositions expressing properties adhering to all intellects). Again, the first two propositions concerning souls (§§ 184–5) describe the hierarchy of divine, intermediate, and lowest (changing) souls, the last seven (§§ 205–11) are about particular souls—and of course the very last proposition (§ 211) expresses Proclus' famous claim against Plotinus that all particular souls descend entirely.

To understand the core of the principles relating the elements of the system to one another and especially the fundamental opposites, let us take a closer look at the famous beginning of the work.

### 3.3.1. One: Polarity and Continuity

Every manifold in some way participates in *to hen*. (*El. theol.* § 1)<sup>34</sup>

It may be tempting to read this very first proposition of the *Elements of Theology* as an expression of the summit of Proclean metaphysics: the One. It would then state, in accordance with the Neoplatonic understanding of Plato's *Parmenides* (142b5–c5), that the metaphysical throne is occupied by a first and absolute unity, the One, as the principle and source of everything else. This is not, however, how we should read this proposition (see Opsomer 2013: 627–8). Instead, it should be read as a general characterization, resembling a definition, of 'manifold', apparently resulting from a conceptual analysis of that notion. Even more generally speaking, it is also a universal principle running through the entire system and justifying its summit. According to that principle, whenever we find a manifold, there must be some 'one' in it as well, both in the manifold as a whole and in its parts considered separately. We should note that the principle uses a semantic ambiguity of *to hen*: in the proposition, 'one' is opposed to *plêthos*, 'manifold', and hence is the equivalent of 'not a manifold'. In the ensuing demonstration, however, it is opposed to 'having parts' and hence means 'partless'. Using this second meaning, the demonstration of the first proposition shows that 'the ultimate constituents of any plurality... need to be atomic' (Opsomer 2013: 629, cf. § 6). Incidentally, these two meanings, 'not a manifold' and 'partless', prepare the ground for a third variety of oneness: that of a manifold as a whole and, hence, the



distinction between a pure one and a one that is at the same time many—connecting, that is, the two polar opposites of one and many by introducing an intermediate entity combining both opposites.

In the subsequent propositions, Proclus combines the two meanings of ‘one’. Since any manifold is both one and not one (§ 2), being *one* manifold but not a partless one, it is different from, posterior to, and dependent on oneness as such. ‘One’ is therefore a necessary condition for ‘many’ (§ 5). Moreover, this ‘one’ has to be ‘the one itself’ (§ 4), which is in no way many and is hence separate from whatever becomes ‘one’ by participation as well as from the ‘one’ the latter participates in (§ 3).

Together, the first five propositions of the *Elements of Theology* come down to a Proclean generalization of the ‘one over many’ argument.<sup>35</sup> It is not until the fifth proposition that Proclus has concluded to the necessity of the One by itself, prior to a plurality of participated ones, on the basis of the general principle expressed in the first proposition.<sup>36</sup>

The ultimate and unique foundation and explanatory principle, the One, is derived from the first opposition, then, i.e. that between unity and plurality. This derivation also involves its distinction from and superiority to the subordinate participable or participated ones and even inferior participating ones—that is, the derivation of a basic hierarchical order.

These first propositions already reveal the two main approaches to solving the problem of polarity: in this case, by clarifying how the opposites combine, the many are also one (they are a mixture) and by introducing an intermediate entity, a one that is also many (more on this in section 3.3.3). Contrary to the Aristotelian analysis of contraries, although the many and the one and in general the properties of the immanent on the one hand and the transcendent on the other are still contraries (*enantia*), they are no longer *not* interdependent; instead, the inferior member always depends on the superior.<sup>37</sup> Moreover, although the inferior is ‘the furthest you can go without leaving the same road’ (Warnock 1950: 552), it is not also the logical or conceptual opposite extreme. Proclus is not a dualist in this sense (cf. Lloyd 1990: 107–10). Instead, the lower extreme is an extreme intermediate form—if ‘one’ is comparable to ‘white’, then ‘many’ is ‘dark grey’, rather than ‘black’.<sup>38</sup>

The propositions concerning one–many do not yet describe any causal processes, probably because the causality of the One is different from that governing the rest of the system.<sup>39</sup> Instead, one could say, they present the logical relation between the fundamental opposites of the system.

### 3.3.2. Two: Cause and Effect

The logic is subsequently elaborated into ontology, i.e. the rules of causation,<sup>40</sup> when Proclus states what is implicit already in his discussion of the relation

one-many: 'Every productive cause is superior to that which it produces' (§ 7) and 'All that exists proceeds from a single first cause' (§ 11)—clear expressions of *hierarchy*, *reductivism*, and *foundation*-1. That first cause and origin of all beings has to be the absolute Good because unqualified goodness is the greatest gift that can be bestowed on anything—and being a cause means giving the gift of participation (§ 12). And since goodness for any existing thing is a preservation or maintenance of its own unity, the absolute Good is identical with the One (§ 13).<sup>41</sup>

But how does that first cause bestow its gifts? What is 'procession' (*prohodos*)? Following Plato's characterization of goodness as necessarily spreading itself, Platonists assume that a perfectly good first principle has an unlimited abundance of power that necessitates production of further principles (cf. § 27). Each of the produced principles, by receiving a measure of its productive power, also becomes a producer of lower things in its turn (§ 25, cf. § 26).<sup>42</sup> For all intents and purposes, the ultimate product has to be the opposite of the principle. But the production of opposites is never immediate: 'Every producing cause brings into existence things the same as itself before the different (*anhomoios*)' (§ 28), and 'All procession is accomplished through a sameness (*homoiotês*) of the secondary to the primary' (§ 29).<sup>43</sup> These propositions and their elaborations make clear that a productive cause produces subsequent levels of producers<sup>44</sup> ever less the same as and hence ever more different from itself. Roughly speaking, it does so in two different 'branches', which Dodds (1963: 208ff.) labels 'vertical' and 'transverse', that correspond to the emanation of universal 'orders' and particulars within these orders respectively.

More concretely, vertical procession results in the well-known hierarchy of 'hypostases': One-Intellect-Soul. Note that Proclus' arguments for this hierarchy in § 20 take its members for granted and concern only their relative order (starting from the bottom and following the well-established hierarchy of properties, according to which the passively moved is inferior to the actively moving, and the actively moving to the unmoved, and the unmoved to the unitary).<sup>45</sup> We should note also that in other passages we find slightly different hierarchies, including, e.g. Nature and body (more on this in section 3.5). Here in *Elements of Theology*, the nature of vertical procession is hardly elaborated on, but elsewhere we find that vertical procession is what guarantees the production of lower orders that differ essentially from their cause, like an image whose essence only resembles its paradigm's essence (*in Parm.* II 745.28–746.5).

On the other hand, the transverse branch, which Proclus presents in § 21 immediately after the vertical one, concerns the procession of the participating from the unparticipated—or, in Proclus' words, the procession of things that are 'co-ordinate' (*sustoichos*) or share a common element because they derive from one and the same (unparticipated) 'monad' (§ 21). In this case, the produced is essentially the same as the primary: intellects proceed from

Intellect, souls from Soul (and for the monads themselves, the One is the monad, cf. § 100).<sup>46</sup> The participating is distinct from the unparticipated because the former, the product, has the essence in ‘declension’ (*huphesis*), with ‘defect’ (*elleipsis*), ‘in a secondary way’ (*deuterôs*) etc., and other effects at a greater distance from the cause have a proportionally (by *analogia*) decreased sameness (and increased difference).<sup>47</sup>

An important consequence of the principles underlying vertical causation is what Olympiodorus calls the ‘Proclean rule’ (possibly because he considered it one of the original elements of Proclus’ system): only the causation of the highest cause reaches all the way down. Causal power is a transferred property just like any other, and hence lower causes have a causal power with a proportionally less extensive range (§ 57, cf. § 62).<sup>48</sup> So all the way at the bottom, we find the lowest matter, which shares in no quality other than unity (albeit in a manner radically different from the One), as it is caused only by the One. The whole of reality may therefore be thought of as a diamond, rather than a pyramid, with the simplest entities at top and bottom, and the greatest complexity in the middle (cf. §§ 58, 59).<sup>49</sup>

To sum up, the core of causality consists in two elements: productive ‘motion’ and degrees of sameness.<sup>50</sup> (1) Productive ‘motion’ is the activity of the prior that of necessity produces the posterior; (2) the posterior either has the same essence but in a lower degree or a different essence. In the former case, the posterior consists of a ‘transverse’ chain of products or effects with an ‘analogically’ or proportionally increasing distinction from their cause.<sup>51</sup> In the latter, the posterior is an image of the higher.<sup>52</sup> We should note, by the way, that Proclus is not introducing something like locomotion in the transcendent or non-spatiotemporal realm. Instead, the terminology of motion is a metaphor emphasizing an opposition with the stability (‘rest’) of identity without difference.<sup>53</sup> If there were no difference, there would only be One, not many. But we know that this is not the case from our own experience. Moreover, it would go against the principle that the perfect necessarily produces. So there must be difference (‘coming’) from identity.<sup>54</sup> So, from One first ‘comes’ ‘two’, the first ‘dyad’ (see 3.3.3.1), then further pluralities—all both many and one (in the sense of being aggregates as well as in the sense of consisting of atomic entities) in different degrees: they ‘remain’ (*menei*) in their producer and as such are ‘in some manner identical’ with it, and they proceed from it and are thereby different (§ 30). The combination of ‘motion’ and proportion thus ensures a continuous and proportional relation between the polar opposites of cause and effect and guarantees *foundation-1* (through difference), *hierarchy*, as well as *coherence* (through sameness)—necessary requirements for preventing empty spaces in the structure of reality—for the continuity between the primary principle and its ultimate products. Polarity is maintained but rendered harmless.

The secret of this solution to polarity is that, through the notion of 'sameness', it makes a triad out of a dyad—as we saw already in the example of the first opposition between 'one' and 'many': it introduces a connective third level in between any two 'opposites' at the metaphysical extremes. This triadic structure is one of the hallmarks of Neoplatonic metaphysics after Iamblichus, and it warrants a closer look. The number of concrete triads encountered in Proclus' works is stunning, so we will not discuss them all here. For our purposes, however, we may roughly divide them into two kinds, corresponding to the two factors 'motion' and 'sameness'.<sup>55</sup>

### 3.3.3. Triads of Motion

#### 3.3.3.1. Mixture

We started in the foregoing from a common-sense notion of procession as a dual relation between cause and effect. A more precise description, however, is that procession consists in a triad of cause, productive power, and product. This is apparent as soon as we reach the level immediately below the One, where we find the first 'duality' of Limit and the Unlimited (*peras* and *apeiron*). As Van Riel shows in this volume, they are hierarchically ordered opposites. The Unlimited, which is the source of the 'difference' or productive motion required for the development of all lower parts of the system from their ultimate explanation (*El. theol.* § 92), itself proceeds from Limit, the source of all 'sameness' or determination<sup>56</sup>—not as its product, but as its power.<sup>57</sup> The product, in turn, results from the combination of limitation and unlimited production, and is the third element in this first triad: the Mixture (*mikton*), i.e. Being.<sup>58</sup> This is an ontologically subsequent and inferior layer that is both limited and unlimited, albeit both impurely. This first triad, then, is the paradigm for all such 'motion' of procession and consists of a producer corresponding to the same, a productive power that corresponds to motion or difference, and the product that is both the same as and different from its cause (*in Tim.* I 176.2–177.2).

#### 3.3.3.2. Full Circle: Reversion

A further specification of the relation between cause and effect concerns the following issue. If a productive power emanates from the producer, what determines where that productive power ceases and results in a product? This is where a second type of triad of motion comes in:

Every effect remains in its cause, proceeds from it and reverts upon it.

(*El. theol.* § 35)<sup>59</sup>

‘Remaining’<sup>60</sup> is the aspect of causation we have encountered as sameness. It ensures the communication (*koinônia*) and connection (*sunhaptesthai*) of cause and effect. If something is connected to its cause, it remains in it insofar as it is connected to it.<sup>61</sup> ‘Proceeding’, as we saw, is the ‘motion’, i.e. the differentiation that distinguishes the effect from its cause. But these two do not suffice to make a product. Or, to put it differently, these two do not explain why there are in fact different kinds of entities, rather than just an ongoing emanation or a petering out of productive power. For there to be lower entities, there have to be points at which the power loops back, as it were, to its source. This is called reversion (*epistrophê*, cf. § 31). To put it in Proclus’ words, any lack of perfection implies a longing for that perfection—and since only the absolute Good is perfect, everything else longs for the absolute Good (cf. *El. theol.* §§ 8–12). This longing is a turning towards the first cause, in an attempt to establish the re-enforcement of conjunction, to limit (without being able to overcome) the distinction resulting from procession. Reversion is possible only due to both remaining and procession, as returning or longing to return requires both an origin to which the effect is still connected somehow, and a separation from that origin. Remaining and reversion both consist in sameness,<sup>62</sup> their difference being that between being and *well-being* (§ 31), and between sameness as the remainder of identity and sameness as the result of resolution.<sup>63</sup>

A brief glance at the primary instantiation of this ‘cyclic activity’ (*κυκλικὴν ἐνέργειαν*, § 33), as Proclus calls it, in the first Mixture allows us to refine our understanding of reversion. For Proclus, the first Mixture, intelligible Being, is not a monolithic hypostasis of an itself thinking intellect containing all Beings or Forms, as it is in Plotinus. Instead, Proclus inserts a hierarchy within Being of three (ontologically inseparable) levels: Being, Life, and Intellect.<sup>64</sup> Of these, Being represents the steadfast element of remaining, Life the productive power of emanation, and Intellect the return to one’s origin (§§ 101–3). Reversion is therefore often associated with intellectual contemplation. It is not the case, however, that only those beings possessing intellect are capable of reversion. All beings revert in their own manner, and reversion, like so many elements of the system, is divided into three kinds, corresponding to the triad of intelligible Being. For simple entities possessing only existence, the longing for the Good consists in no more than the receptivity to participation in the cause (reversion ‘by way of existence’); entities that are moreover alive revert by way of existence as well as by moving (i.e. changing) towards their cause (‘by way of life’); those that are also capable of thinking not only revert by way of existence and by way of life, but also by a consciousness of the goodness of the cause (‘by way of cognition’, § 39). All three manners of reverting, however, consist in entities reaching perfection—the perfection, that is, that fits their station.

This second triad of motion provides the system with one of its most thorough forms of *coherence*, by turning the rectilinear motion of procession

into one continuous circular motion tying 'the end to the beginning' (§ 33; cf. *in Eucl.* 108.10–16).

### 3.3.4. Triads of Sameness: The Mean

Next to these two kinds of triads related to motion or difference is a third kind of triad more concerned with sameness. This third kind knows the most varied applications and in that sense forms the heart of the system. Dodds (1963: p. xxii) calls it the doctrine of the mean: 'that two doubly disjunct terms AB and not-A not-B cannot be discontinuous, but must be linked by an intermediate term, either A not-B or B not-A, which forms a "triad" with them'.<sup>65</sup> More specifically, it entails that since two extremes or polar opposites, one of which is superior (and in that sense transcendent) to and the ultimate cause of the inferior, are themselves not connected, the two must be connected by an intermediate entity. We have already seen an example of such a gradual transition from one opposite to the other in the participated 'ones' between one and many (section 3.3.1). In this most important variety, the mean safeguards the utter transcendence, without harmful separation, of the cause in transverse causation: the participated universals intermediate between the unparticipated universal and the participating particulars (§§ 23, 24, 81) allow the primary universal (or monad) to remain utterly unchanged while still being a cause.

Just as important, especially from a human point of view, is the order of soul, which is the intermediate between the indivisible and the divided, i.e. between the intelligible and the sensible (§ 190). But these intermediates are, in theory, found between any two opposites or radically different properties, down to the lowly *meson* that may well have been the source of inspiration for the triads in the first place: the bond linking the tangible and visible elements.<sup>66</sup> 'It is not possible', Timaeus says, 'for only two things to be well combined in the absence of some third thing, for there must be some bond in the middle which brings the two together' (*Tim.* 31bc).<sup>67</sup>

In many cases, the application of the principle of the *meson* results in a triad only from a distance: a closer look reveals further distinctions within the intermediate. First, different ontological levels require different means. The participated, for example, is not monolithic but is a whole series of participated universals for different ontological levels (cf. Chlup 2012: 105). Second, as Dodds' example shows, there are two possible means (A not-B and B not-A). Since the order of terms is, for Platonists, an indication of hierarchy, this means that these two means represent different levels between two opposites. So, for example, the intermediate between Being and Becoming is split into the superior Soul (Being-and-Becoming) and inferior Nature (Becoming-and-Being). But this reveals yet another possibility, which we see instantiated in

the *meson* between the intelligible and the intellective (i.e. the object and the subject of contemplation): this *meson* is a triad consisting of ‘more-intelligible-and-less-intellective’, ‘equally-intelligible-and-intellective’, and ‘less-intelligible-and-more-intellective’.<sup>68</sup> Obviously, infinite regress is looming on the horizon. We will return to this point in 3.5.

As may be clear from these examples, in different contexts different properties are at centre stage, and hence we find many different (composite) means between the highest and the lowest levels of reality. For example, under the aspect of motion, the intelligible, the psychic, and the corporeal are ordered from ‘unmoved’ through ‘self-moved’ to ‘other-moved’.<sup>69</sup> Under the aspect of subsistence, from the intelligible, which is ‘itself’, through intellect, which is ‘its own’, soul as ‘its own and another’s’, and nature as ‘another’s’, we reach the sensible ‘other’.<sup>70</sup>

The Pythagorean background to Proclus’ system is obvious: after the One that constitutes the ultimate explanation comes the dyad that provides polarity and differentiation or procession of a plurality of ones, followed by the triad (or plurality) which consolidates the whole and keeps it together (cf. *in Parm.* VI 1111.13–14). The many triadic structures in Proclus’ system all guarantee, in different ways, *coherence*, by maintaining *koinônia*, or association, of cause and effect, *hierarchy*, by establishing their relative order, and *comprehensive-ness*, by starting from extremes and including anything in between.<sup>71</sup>

### 3.3.5. All in All and the Modes of Being

The principles of causality, and especially the doctrine of the mean, have an important corollary, which is perhaps the most emphatic contribution to the *coherence* of Proclus’ system, and the best example of ‘taking the principles to their logical conclusions’: the principle ‘All in all, but appropriately to each’.<sup>72</sup> This corollary is not to be confused with ‘all in all, and each separately’, which emphasizes another important contribution to *coherence*: the unity of a fully interpenetrating plurality within one ontological order.<sup>73</sup> ‘All in all, but appropriately to each’, however, explains the coherence between ontological levels. And its applications provide more concrete insight into how productive motion or difference and degrees of sameness combine.<sup>74</sup> Since, in Neoplatonic metaphysics, something can only cause what it itself possesses, each lower level of reality is precontained in the higher levels. But we do not find them as such. Instead, we find them in the manner appropriate to the level they are on. So, basically, for all except the highest and lowest levels of reality there are three different ways of being or being the same.<sup>75</sup> First of all, something can be entirely the same (‘selfsame’)—a property it has only in relation to itself, i.e. being substantially itself. Second, it can be both the same and different, in one of two ways. First, when A is the cause of B, it is B, not

substantially but 'in the manner of a cause', i.e. paradigmatically; second, when C is the product of B, it *is* B but 'by participation', i.e. iconically (§ 65). Likewise, however, C *is* A by participation, and A *is* C paradigmatically—but neither, of course, in the same manner as B. So how can we distinguish the manners in which A and B are paradigmatically C? This is done by further specifying that A is such in an A-manner, and B in a B-manner.<sup>76</sup>

The first time—and the highest level at which the principle is explicitly invoked—is again that of the first causal triad of Being, Life, Intellect.<sup>77</sup>

All in all, but appropriately in each: for in being are life and intellect, and in life being and intelligizing, and in intellect being and living, but here all are in the manner of intellect, there in the manner of life, and there in the manner of being. (§ 103)<sup>78</sup>

As it stands, this is far from clear, but Proclus' subsequent elaboration helps. Following the principle set out in § 65, the first term, Being, contains the other two as their cause; the mean, Life, contains the first by participation and the last as cause; and the last term, Intellect, contains both by participation. We thus obtain three instances, and hence three varieties, of 'being by participation'. They are distinguished by, on the one hand, the specific mode of being, in the example, of Life and Intellect, and on the other hand, by the nature of what is participated. Intellect, for instance, is Being 'in the manner of intellect', in the sense that Intellect is a cognitive being. That is how Intellect *is*. Likewise, Intellect is Life in the sense that its life consists in cognition. That is how Intellect *is active*.

Further on in the *Elements of Theology* we find the same principle applied to the three levels of reality that structure the work: henads, intellects, souls. All things are in the henads, in accordance with their distinctive character (*idiotês*), i.e. in a unitary and supra-existential manner. Likewise, intellects are everything—but only intellectually. That is, Proclus explains, every intellect appropriates everything to itself, both what it is by participation and what it is as cause, in accordance with its own being (*huparxis*). Intellects are what they participate in, according to their own distinctive character and potential (*idiotês, dunamis*); they contain what they cause as causes, and hence by their being. And their being is intellectual (§ 173).<sup>79</sup>

A third example:

Every soul is all things, the things of sense after the manner of an exemplar and the intelligible things after the manner of an image. (§ 195)<sup>80</sup>

In the subsequent argument, Proclus explains how the soul, as the cause of the perceptible, is the things of sense 'paradigmatically' and, having proceeded itself from the intelligible, is the intelligible 'iconically'.

What this means more concretely is that all creative principles, i.e. the Forms, are present in the soul in a manner suitable to the soul: divided, as a



manifold, and self-moved. It also means that all the creative principles working in the sensibles, i.e. the *logoi*, ultimately descending from the Forms, are present in soul without matter, body, or extension.<sup>81</sup>

We find the same relation elsewhere, albeit described in slightly different terminology, as existing between the intelligible, the physical, and the 'intermediate' mathematical: in the intelligible we find the middle and last 'in a primary way'; in the mathematical we find the first iconically and the third paradigmatically; and in the physical we find the first and second as 'reflections' (*indalmata*) (*in Tim.* I 8.13–21). Here, the mode of being 'by participation' is divided into 'iconically' for mathematical entities and 'as reflections' for the physical.

Especially the last three examples reveal the importance of this principle in human life: this is where metaphysics and epistemology are most closely intertwined. Because of 'all in all', all levels of reality are present in some way in intellect, in the soul, and in mathematics. The principle thus forms the foundation of real knowledge and perception.<sup>82</sup> We will come back to this in 3.4.

Let us now return to the metaphysical side of the principle. The examples show that there are four factors of 'appropriateness', expressed in adverbial clauses. First, they express either (1) a relative mode of being, or (2) an absolute one. They express the relative when they refer to a mode of being relative to the level of being to which the property in question belongs substantially (e.g. 'after the manner of an image'), and the absolute when they refer to the mode proper to a specific level of reality. Second, the absolute mode of being may refer (3) to the level itself (e.g. 'in the manner of soul'), or (4) to one of its essential properties (e.g. 'in a divided manner'). More importantly, we are now in a position to better understand the nature of vertical causation. A product participates in some properties (or *dunamis*) of its producer but not in others, and certainly not in its distinctive character (*idiotês*). Therefore, it participates in the properties it does participate in in its own specific manner.<sup>83</sup> The opposite, in a sense, is the case with subtraction (*huphesis*, § 97) and *analogia* in transverse causation. In this case, lower entities receive the distinctive character (*idiotês*) from their monad, but not all its properties. Following this principle, any level of reality, any pair of opposites, and any triad is thus 'adverbialized' to express modes of being. Therefore, the pervasiveness of the principle of 'all in all' is astounding. To name but some examples, something can have its being in the manner of one or in the manner of the many (§ 118); according to the whole before the parts, according to the whole of parts, or according to the whole in the parts (the mereology expressing degrees of universality and participation, cf. §§ 66–74);<sup>84</sup> transcendently or immanently; in an unextended manner or in an extended manner; and of course in a divine, daemonic, and human manner.<sup>85</sup>

At the lower extremes of the ontological hierarchy, we find the most surprising applications of the principle of 'all in all'. For example, Proclus describes a hierarchy of elements: in the heavenly realm, fire is present *substantially*, but earth as a cause (*kat'aitian*); in the sublunary realm, earth is real earth, but fire is present in a participated form (*kata methexin*).<sup>86</sup> And of course, all elements are present in one another in their own manner. Thus, fire is all elements, 'in a fiery way', and this obtains, *mutatis mutandis*, for the other elements as well.<sup>87</sup> And finally, the principle even lies at the heart of the *sumpatheia* necessary for theurgy and at the heart of astrology since the earthly is present in the heavenly *kat'aitian*, and the heavenly on earth 'in an earthly manner'.<sup>88</sup>

### 3.4. EPISTEMOLOGY AND EXEGESIS

An important function of the principle of 'all in all' is that it guarantees the possibility of human reversion. Since all intellects know all things, but each in their appropriate manner (§ 170), and all souls are all things in their appropriate manner, (qualified) knowledge of everything is possible even for humans.<sup>89</sup> And that knowledge is a prerequisite for the fulfilment of the human telos.

So far, we have worked on the assumption that finding real explanations built on the foundation of UP is the Platonists' primary motivation for systematizing. In discussions on Proclus' systematicity, however, other motives have been suggested as well: a desire to present a worthy alternative to Christianity (Beierwaltes 1987: 368; cf. Cleary 2013), an attempt to offer a 'feeling of safety' to everyone by showing how all things have their unique place in a comprehensive hierarchical structure (Chlup 2012: 16), or the wish to rationalize certain aspects of mysticism.<sup>90</sup> There is certainly circumstantial evidence for the first two (non-philosophical) motives, but very little, if any, direct evidence can be found in Proclus' work. The third option, however, can be easily related to Proclus' expression of the Platonists' ultimate aim to which finding real explanations is instrumental. The discursive human mind needs a highly systematized philosophy to reach its ultimate aim: *homoiôsis theôi* or the 'mystic' unification of the soul with the divine.<sup>91</sup> The structures offered by this rigorous philosophical system with its triads and modes of being help the mind to overcome the limitations of discursivity (i.e. division, plurality, and sequence), obtain the foundation of all knowledge, and thereby take necessary (though not sufficient) steps towards realizing its own full potential. This argument can be found scattered throughout Proclus' work, but most emphatically in his prologues to Euclid's *Elements*, especially in the defence of mathematics as the most beautiful of sciences (*epistêmai*) and the definition of 'elementation' (*stoicheiôsis*),<sup>92</sup> one of

the passages in ancient sources where we come quite close to an explicit formulation of the notion of a system of thought.<sup>93</sup> For Proclus, the presentation of thought follows that of metaphysics. We now know that this *foundation-2* is justified by the principle of ‘all-in-all’.

We can now also see how the almost mathematical texture of reality allows us to use the *analogia* between levels of reality in our own development. The soul reverts by thinking, and after the stage of self-reversion in which we acquire self-knowledge, i.e. knowledge of our causes ‘in the manner in which they exist in the effect’,<sup>94</sup> *analogical* reasoning—i.e. dialectic—(and a lot of training) will allow us to translate the manner in which the cause exists in us into the manner in which it is substantially—and thus, ultimately, provide the foundation of knowledge.<sup>95</sup>

Iamblichus’ curriculum (see Chapter 2), which was taken over by Proclus, is structured according to the same principle of reversion: after the preparatory work, its Platonic section starts with reversion to the self by reading the *First Alcibiades* and then moves further up the metaphysical ladder until we reach discursive ‘cognition’ of the One-Being. And although some of the systematic works seem to follow the order, not of cognition, but of reality, they too start out with a short analysis: as we saw, the *Elements of Theology* starts from the general conception of unity and plurality and works its way up to the One as first principle and only then back down to the soul.<sup>96</sup> Even in the commentaries, the order of which is dictated by the Platonic text, Proclus manages to include analysis before synthesis.<sup>97</sup> All this is possible due to the structure of the system and Proclus’ hermeneutical assumptions. The two main assumptions of Proclus’ hermeneutics are as follows.

1. Platonic doctrine is (obscured) truth originally revealed by the gods and passed on in many different philosophical and religious texts, with differing degrees of clarity and correctness. These texts ultimately all describe the same truths—i.e. the system Proclus himself sets out in his systematic works.<sup>98</sup> Finding that system involves finding out how all these texts cohere. This is what we called *comprehensiveness-2*.
2. Every Platonic text has one single aim (*heis skopos*) that determines all the details of that text (cf. *in Remp.* I 6.1–4). In the exegesis of any Platonic text this unique aim has to be identified and every detail of the text should be subsequently explained in terms of that aim. Both these requirements have consequences for the system: in the commentaries, but also in *Platonic Theology*, we frequently find what we could call ad hoc adjustments of the system or rather, perhaps, further elaborations of the system, designed to incorporate details of Platonic texts—for example, it is the Platonic material that determines the different triads in which Beauty figures, rather than the demands of the system as such (see e.g. *Theol. plat.* I 22; III 11).

### 3.5. CONCLUSION: SYSTEMATICITY AND ITS DOWNSIDES

In Proclus' and other post-Plotinian varieties of a systematic construct based on *Ur-Platonism*, the hierarchical and reductivist *foundation*-1 is given by the absolute unity of the One, followed by subsequent principles, which are ordered below it according to increasing difference and decreasing sameness. *Comprehensiveness*-1 and *coherence*—and hence the connection of polar opposites—are both guaranteed in different ways: primarily by the different principles of causality, all working with the combination of productive motion (or difference) and sameness, and by the triads. *Foundation*-2 is given by the structuring and founding of all thought in self-evident first principles (to be reached through reversion), as a reflection of the ultimate foundation of all of reality in the One (cf. Beierwaltes 1987).

The earlier remarks about the consequences of the hermeneutical assumptions, however, force us to ask to what extent Proclus succeeds at fulfilling the task he seems to set himself, i.e. presenting an entirely coherent and comprehensive explanation of reality. Does he always fulfil the requirements we describe? Is that even possible? And does adherence to the criteria guarantee a *good* system?

The first disadvantage of Proclus' systematicity is his strict adherence to some of his principles. One might call this strict adherence to principles 'saving the principles', which is more informative than the first pejorative sense of 'systematic' or the pejorative use of 'scholastic' is, but it comes down to the same thing: logical constraints dictate the ontological details of the system even if their universal application leads (apparently) to the postulation of superfluous entities or unnecessary complexity or results in internal conflict or in the contradiction of common sense and phenomenal data. Aristotle (*Met. A* 5, 986a3–12) famously mentions the Pythagorean counter-earth as an example of the first: filling remaining gaps to obtain a coherent system (*pragmateia*). Proclus' system seems to be full of such 'counter-earths': for example, fourteen levels of henads (often mentioned as a prime example of systematizing in the sense of 'taking Iamblichus' views to their logical conclusion'),<sup>99</sup> four levels of matter, and an army of demiurges.<sup>100</sup> Before deciding that entities are superfluous and hence diminish the quality of the system, however, we should of course try our utmost to find out what problem (philosophical or otherwise) they are meant to solve. The henads also serve as an example of internal conflict: a quite densely populated layer of explanatory entities is inserted at the top of the hierarchy. Adhering to *coherence* implies violating *reductivism*, it seems. But it has been shown that the henads solve both a philosophical and an exegetical problem.<sup>101</sup> So, apparently *reductivism* is made subservient to *coherence* and *comprehensiveness*-2 (or possibly religious tradition and even piety).<sup>102</sup> Finally, Proclus' notion of 'real

astronomy' might be mentioned as a case of adjusting the phenomena to the system. To stick to the principles of the system, Proclus cannot accept the Ptolemaic hypotheses concerning epicycles. So he posits what looks to us like a nonsensical 'hyperastronomy', studying 'motion itself by itself'.<sup>103</sup>

A second downside of the system is that principles are sometimes *not* taken to their logical conclusions—probably because this would result in internal conflict.<sup>104</sup> Clear examples are the absence of a monad of Nature and of Body: a monad by definition transcends the material realm, whereas nature and body are essentially connected to the material world. The principles of causation dictate that there should be monads of Nature and Body (if there are many natures/bodies, there have to be corresponding monads in which they participate) and that there cannot be such entities (since monads are independent of body).<sup>105</sup> In such cases, one can either say that the system reaches its own limits (unfortunately right where it hurts, namely the connection of the transcendent to the immanent), or attempt to find out if Proclus perhaps presents a solution himself by postulating something like an escape clause.

These are all small issues or even non-issues, however. Two seemingly bigger threats to the explanatory function of the system may be the doctrine of the mean and the principle of 'all in all'. If there is no rule that indicates where one is to stop interpolating even more intermediate levels, the doctrine of the mean will lead to infinite regress—and leave us without an explanation. Alternatively, ceasing to interpolate intermediate levels still leaves us without an explanation since all we have is a larger number of small gaps instead of one big gap. It seems at times that Proclus determines where to stop inserting more levels only on the basis of the theory of revelation: if his sources do not mention an entity or level it is not postulated as part of the system. And finally, the principle of 'all in all' allows us to say that the One is many, etc., and hence introduces the possibility of true contradiction, which seems to threaten the coherence of the system. Although this may seem a major problem, we have seen that the problem of polarity is tackled by Neoplatonists precisely by accepting the coincidence of opposites—although always under a certain mode of being. So there is no need for them to give up the principle of contradiction.<sup>106</sup>

The fact that the system is not perfect is, perhaps, not really interesting as such. Perhaps it is far more interesting, and more relevant, to find out where problems occur, why they occur, and how Proclus tries to solve them—and especially which principles he tends to give priority to. In this way, the problem areas will help us better understand the nature of Proclus' systematicity.

Or should we say 'Iamblichus', Syrianus' and Proclus' systematicity'? What is it, to return to our starting point, that makes Proclus surpass his predecessors' systematicity? We propose three things. First of all, although most of the elements and principles on which the system is built were in place

already after Iamblichus, it was Proclus who realized the potential of these components and the degree to which they allowed systematic, 'Euclidean' presentations such as the *Elements of Theology* (cf. the second sense of *systematization*).<sup>107</sup> Second, as far as we can gather from the extant sources, of all Neoplatonist thinkers, Proclus has probably been the most thorough in taking the principles to their logical conclusions. And finally, again, he is most thorough in applying those same principles to a huge corpus of previous philosophical and religious traditions (*comprehensiveness-2*). To say that Proclus is a mere systematizer is like saying that Ovid is a mere compiler of ancient mythology.<sup>108</sup>

## NOTES

1. For characterizations of Proclus' philosophy as a system, see n. 3.
2. Beierwaltes and Cleary are exceptions. In the following, we will build on Beierwaltes' positive analysis (1987, 2007a). There is some overlap between his approach to the concept of systematization and ours, but Beierwaltes answers the question whether Proclus is 'ein systematischer Philosoph' from a narrower, Hegelian perspective. The same goes for Cleary (2013). On Hegel and the notion of *System*, see below.
3. For this distinction, see Beierwaltes (1987: 353). Most scholars emphasize the second sense, e.g. Chlup (2012: p. i), Remes (2008: 27–8), Siorvanes (1996: p. x), Wallis (1995: 138, 144–5), Gadamer (2013: p. lvi), and of course Hegel (*Vorlesungen*, 19. 37); cf. Asper (2013). The first sense one finds primarily in Hegelians, e.g. Lowry (1980: 37).
4. Dodds (1963). More on the *Elements of Theology* below in section 3.3.
5. Cf. Chlup (2012: 1): 'While not an entirely original thinker, Proclus produced the most systematic version of late Neoplatonic philosophy...'
6. On Iamblichus and Syrianus as Proclus' sources, see Morrow and Dillon (1987: pp. xiv–vi), Saffrey and Westerink (1968–97: I, pp. xxxv–xxxliii), Dodds (1963: xxii), and D'Ancona (2000). The possible role of Plutarch of Athens remains—and perhaps must remain—obscure.
7. On the method and the nature of the principles, see 3.3.1 and 3.3.2.
8. This is a stipulative definition but not a normative one. As will become clear in the following section, the characteristics mentioned here are the natural concomitants of the fundamentals of Platonism.
9. Versions of comprehensiveness, coherence, and foundation are also found in Beierwaltes (1987: 367).
10. Be it in the Hegelian sense that earlier systems are included as contributions to a development towards the absolute, or in the sense that is more relevant to us, namely, that they are all taken to ultimately express the same truths about reality and can hence be referred to in the explanation of reality. See below section 3.4.
11. Pace MacIsaac (2002).

12. There are comprehensive philosophical theories that do not aim (primarily) at furthering our understanding of reality, and lack this characteristic (one might think of Pyrrhonian scepticism or certain formal systems), but they are irrelevant in this context.
13. The *locus classicus* for such foundationalism is of course Aristotle's *An. post.* I 3.
14. We should note, however, that this does not mean that there cannot be a proliferation of causes, as there clearly is in (not only) Proclus' system. It merely means that these causes have to be subordinate to a lower number of higher and ultimately the lowest possible number of first causes. It also does not mean—even though one could argue that it should—that a good system should not contain entities that do not have an explanatory role.
15. Cf. Catana (2008: 3, 33, 51); see also Longo (2011: 489–90).
16. On the subordination of sciences in Proclus, see Martijn (2010b).
17. Hegel, *Vorlesungen über die Geschichte der Philosophie*, 468. On Hegel and Proclus (and Brucker), see also Beierwaltes (2007a), Cleary (2013), and Catana (2008: 212 ff.).
18. Hegel, *Vorlesungen über die Geschichte der Philosophie*, 49, Einleitung p. 44.
19. For the formulation of UP and different positive constructs down to Plotinus, see Gerson (2013).
20. Gerson calls them 'anti-materialism', 'anti-mechanism', 'anti-nominalism', 'anti-relativism', and 'anti-skepticism' (2013: 9–19).
21. The following is circular to the extent that we stipulate what a system is on the basis of past usage of the term 'philosophical system', adjusting it where necessary to fit Proclus' work. We do not consider this circularity a problem, as we hope the combination of UP and the analysis we give of 'systematic' elements in Proclus' thought justify the list. For a remark on the nature of a *good* system and a problem in our list of requirements, see section 3.5.
22. Or: a real cause by definition transcends its effect, *El. theol.* § 75.
23. On this principle and how it unites the *antis*, see Gerson (2013). Analyses of philosophical thought that are related in different ways to the notion of system here presented are Lovejoy's *Great Chain of Being* (1936) with the Principle of Plenitude, Principle of Continuity, Principle of Gradation, and the Classical Model of Science (De Jong and Betti [2010]). We will not go into them here.
24. On the use of polar opposites as basic explanatory principles in early Greek thought, see Lloyd (1966), esp. his explanation at (1966: 7).
25. Best known from Aristotle's presentation of it in *Met. A* 5, 986a22 ff.
26. Starting with Natorp's *Platos Ideenlehre* (1903: 73). The questions whether the Forms can and should be *separate* (*χωρίς*) are of course already present in Plato (*Parm.* 129d, 130b; *Phil.* 15b) and Aristotle (e.g. *Met. M* 9, 1086b6–7).
27. *Theol. plat.* III 2, 6.21–3: *Εἰ γὰρ δεῖ συνεχῇ τὴν πρόοδον εἶναι τῶν ὄντων καὶ μὴδὲν παρεμπίπτειν κενόν.*
28. We should note that dynamic here has nothing to do with *dunamis* but everything to do with *energeia*. We use the expression 'dynamic' as the counterpart of 'structural', but of course without thereby introducing motion in the intelligible. More on this later. See also Beierwaltes (1985: 155–74; 1965: 34–5), Gersh (1973: 103), and Gerson (2016). Finally, the distinction 'dynamic'–'structural' is a

conceptual one. It does not designate a rigid separation of principles within the system.

29. See Martijn (2014). We should note that, for Hegel, a philosophical system cannot follow the geometrical method (for his criticism of applying that method in philosophy, see e.g. *Vorlesungen über die Geschichte der Philosophie*, 166 ff.).
30. On this topic, see section 3.4 and Martijn (2014). The *Elements of Theology*, because of its didactic and 'Euclidean' method of presentation, does not display *comprehensiveness-2*: there are no references to predecessors, contemporaries, etc. For this aspect of Proclus' system we have to consider other works.
31. Dodds (1963: p. x). 'Declension' is Dodds' translation of *ὑπόβασις* and *ὑφρεσις* (also translated as 'remission'), i.e. the ontological descent from cause to caused and the subsequent diminution of powers etc. See 3.3.2. 'Reflection' translates *εἶδωλα* and *ἐμφάσεις*, i.e. ontological images. Active and passive potency refer, in an Aristotelian manner, to the power to impose change and the capacity to undergo change respectively.
32. On these different layers of reality, see respectively Chs 4, 5, and 6 in this volume.
33. In the manuscripts, the propositions are distinguished but not called propositions. The division into subsections is Dodds', not Proclus', but it is justified by the content.
34. *Πᾶν πλῆθος μετέχει πη τοῦ ἐνός*. Dodds translates *μετέχει* transitively ('participates unity') in light of Proclus' use of the passive elsewhere in the *El. theol.* for that which is 'participated' (*τὸ μετεχόμενον*). We chose the more common 'participate in'. More importantly, we have left *τοῦ ἐνός* (*tou henos*), which Dodds translates as 'unity', untranslated for now.
35. *Parm.* 132a1–4 and its semantic variety at *Resp.* X 596a6–7. On this argument and Aristotle's response to it, see Fine (1993: esp. ch. 8).
36. On the One as ultimate principle, see Ch. 4 in this volume. For the relation between the One and the oneness of multiplicity, see also in *Parm.* I 696.34–697.14, roughly containing the same argument as §§ 1–5, and of course Plato, *Parm.* 157c1–2 (*Οὐδὲ μὴν στέρεται γε παντάπασιν τοῦ ἐνός τᾶλλα, ἀλλὰ μετέχει πη*), the commentary on which is no longer extant. Cf. also Plotinus, *Enn.* VI 9 [9] 1–2, who, however, primarily discusses the One as the source of the being of all beings since unity is a necessary requirement for being (VI 9 [9] 1.1). We should note that Meijer (1992: 94–5) argues that 'one' in VI 9 is not the One either.
37. Aristotle, *Cat.* 10, 11b33–5: *τὰ δὲ ὡς τὰ ἐναντία, αὐτὰ μὲν ἅπερ ἐστὶν οὐδαμῶς πρὸς ἄλληλα λέγεται, ἐναντία μὲντοι ἀλλήλων λέγεται*.
38. Cf. Plato's rejection of pure not-being and his explanation of not-being as a kind of being (being different) in *Sophist* (e.g. 257b3–4).
39. See Ch. 4 in this volume.
40. At *Theol. plat.* III 2 Proclus introduces four axioms (*ἀξιώματα*) (11.23), or fundamental principles of causality relevant to his subsequent exposition on the henads: all productive causes produce same before different (6.14–7.25); every monad produces a coordinate series of sames before a multitude of different (7.25–9.11); higher causes produce more than lower ones (9.12–10.14); imparticipable causes exist before participated causes (10.15–11.15). For the correspondence with



- El. theol.*, see the notes of Saffrey and Westerink (1968–97: iii. 107) (note that the summary they give of the third ‘axiom’ in their preliminary analysis on p. ciii is better).
41. On the identity of One and Good in Proclus, see Steel (1991) and Gerson (2016).
  42. On the incorporation of Aristotelian *dunamis* into theories of emanation by Iamblichus and after, see Van Riel (2001b). We should note that Van Riel uses ‘vertical’ (and ‘horizontal’) in a different sense than we will use it in the following.
  43. Dodds translates *ὁμοιότης* as ‘likeness’. We use the stronger ‘sameness’, to express the fact that, for Proclus, *ὁμοιότης* is a combination of partial identity (*ταυτότης*) and partial otherness. Identity is here the sharing of all properties. Cause and effect, for example, are the same thing but in different manners. For more on this, see 3.3.2. On the combination of identity and otherness and why it is necessary, see also *Theol. plat.* III 2, 6.14–7.25 and Baltzly (2008).
  44. A category of entities we will not discuss here is that of the self-constituted. The highest levels immediately below the One/Good not only produce lower ones but also constitute themselves by proceeding from themselves (and reverting to themselves, see 3.3.3.1). Proclus’ main argument (by *reductio*) for self-constitution is that the highest level of participation in goodness is that of *autarkeia*, i.e. the capacity to provide their own good from themselves, which in turn implies an independent and hence self-constituted existence (§ 40). See § 9, §§ 41–51, and Chlup (2012: 69–72).
  45. As Dodds (1963: 206) beautifully remarks, this ‘trinity of subordination’ is established through a ‘regressive dialectic’.
  46. In *in Parm.* II, horizontal procession is classified into different kinds, fitting different ontological levels: the Henads (‘Ones’) proceed through unity, the Forms through identity, and everything below it through sameness (*in Parm.* II 745.14–22).
  47. *El. theol.* §§ 21, 24, 63, 97, and 125. *Analogia* here is a *causal* relation of proportionality, not merely a perceived similarity that functions as the basis for analogical reasoning. Cf. § 100 (for perceived similarity, see the definition by Lloyd 1966: 7–8). For Proclus, the latter functions due to the former.
  48. Olympiodorus, *in Alc.* 109.18–110.13 (Westerink), cf. Lloyd (1990: 106).
  49. As in the Iamblichean system, over against the Plotinian system, the first principle is causally active from top to bottom, which guarantees *coherence/continuity*. The difference between Iamblichus and Proclus lies in the fact that, according to the former, all principles are causally active to the bottom, whereas for the latter, the lower a principle the sooner it ‘dries up’.
  50. Beierwaltes (1979: 34) refers to this combination as ‘dynamische ontologische Identität’.
  51. This is very clearly stated in § 125. Cf. § 36. On *analogia*, see also Beierwaltes (1979: 153 ff.).
  52. *ταυτόν πῃ ἅμα καὶ ἕτερον*. In 3.3.5 we will look at Proclus’ further specification of the nature of the manners in which one thing can be the same as and different from another.

53. Cf. § 26. In an important study, Gersh suggests that the motion of the spiritual levels is logical and can be understood as identical to the irregularity inherent in difference or multiplicity on the level of Being-Life-Intellect. See esp. Gersh (1973: 115–16).
54. This metaphysical 'motion' is part of a well-known triad (on triads, see later) of remaining, procession, and reversion introduced in § 35. For procession and reversion in Plotinus, see *Enn.* V 2 [11].
55. The triadic structure stems directly from Iamblichean/Neo-Pythagorean number theory, but its mediated origin is Pythagorean. For inspiration by Plato, see 3.3.4. Note that the triadic structure is the element of Proclus' system that Hegel praises above all (*Vorlesungen*, 473). For an elaborate discussion of the role of the triad in Proclus, see Beierwaltes (1979: 24ff.). On the different kinds of triads, see Beierwaltes (1979: 48ff.). See also Helmig and Steel (2011), Dodds (1963: esp. 252–4), Lloyd (1990: 111–17), Chlup (2012: esp. 94–7). For a different categorization of the triads into reified, non-reified, and 'on the fringe', see Lloyd (1990: 116–17).
56. Lloyd (1990: 110) remarks on the self-contradiction in this, but it fits the Aristotelian principle that actuality precedes potentiality.
57. *Theol. plat.* III 12, 45.3–6. The 'first Unlimited' is entirely unmixed with limit (*El. theol.* § 90).
58. Note that the mixture is not the same as the 'mean', i.e. the intermediate entity sharing properties with both the inferior and the superior (as suggested by Chlup 2012: 94 n. 90). Rather, the first Mixture is the paradigm of any level resulting from the productive power of a superior level. On the *mikton* in *El. theol.*, see §§ 89–90 and § 102. On the mean, see 3.3.4.
59. For an elaborate discussion of the triad of remaining, procession, and reversion, see also Gersh (1973: ch. 3), Beierwaltes (1979: 158–64), Dodds (1963: 220–1), Chlup (2012: 94–7). For the doctrine, see also Gersh (1978: 45–57). On the related triad of *ousia/huparxis*, *dunamis*, and *energeia* (essence, potency, and activity), see Proclus, in *Alc.* 83.20–84.11, and *Theol. plat.* III 16, 57.3–4 with the note by Saffrey and Westerink. For examples of this triad in different hypostases, see in *Tim.* I 371.10–372.18. For examples of how the distinction between especially essence and activity closes ontological gaps, see Chs 6 and 7 in this volume.
60. The Greek text of the proposition only has the verb μένειν. Dodds adds the noun 'immanence' on several occasions, but we prefer the simple nominalization of the verb since 'immanence' may easily be mistaken for the presence of the universal within the particular(s).
61. *El. theol.* § 35, εἰ γὰρ συνήπτο, κατ'ἐκείνο πάντως ἔμενεν.
62. Ὁμοιότης. § 32 is a clear echo of § 29. Cf. § 38.
63. Cf. ἡ πρόοδος ἐν τῇ ὑφέσει σώζει τὸ ταῦτόν, *El. theol.* § 29; τὸ γὰρ ἐπιστρέφον πᾶν ἀναλύοντι ἔοικεν εἰς ἐκείνο, ἀφ' οὗ διήρηται κατ' οὐσίαν, § 35.
64. For this triad, see Ch. 5 in this volume.
65. Beierwaltes (1979: 72 ff.) discusses it under the heading APXH - ΜΕΣΟΝ - ΤΕΛΟΣ, ΠΡΩΤΟΝ - ΜΕΣΟΝ - ΕΣΧΑΤΟΝ.
66. Cf. also § 132 on intermediate divine orders.
67. (Proclus' comments at in *Tim.* II 13.15 ff.) Proclus calls the physical bond one that brings together opposites and creates continuity, II 28.2–3, cf. II 18.6–8. We should note that in *Tim.* these bonds are not one but two in order to ensure the

solidity of the cosmos. It should also be noted that in the passage in *in Tim.* there is no relation of causation between the different elements. Proclus does, however, ascribe to them a very similar relation of what we may call ‘appropriate sameness’ (cf. 3.3.5).

68. *Theol. plat.* IV 2, 12.25–13.2 (echoing *Tim.* by speaking of a ‘sustaining mean’, *συνεκτικὴν μεσότητα*); 3, 16.11–17. See also Beierwaltes (1979: 89–93); *in Parm.* VI 1049.15; *in Tim.* I 234.28; 418.14, and Chs 4 and 5 in this volume.
69. ‘All that exists is either unmoved or moved; and if the latter, either by itself or by another, and if by itself, it is self-moved; and if by another, it is other-moved; so everything is either unmoved, self-moved, or other-moved’ (*El. theol.* § 14; cf. *in Tim.* I 373.13–15). For a critical elaboration of the arguments for this proposition, see Opsomer (2009).
70. *In Tim.* I 10.24–11.9. The labels may refer to different kinds of causes (Tarrant ad loc.) but cf. *El. theol.* § 23. Cf. 373.7–11, one of the examples supporting Proclus’ statement of the principle of plenitude.
71. For the place of association (*κοινωνία*) in the Proclean solution to polarity, see Beierwaltes (1979: 31–48).
72. *El. theol.* § 103: *Πάντα ἐν πάσιν, οἰκείως δὲ ἐν ἐκάστω*. This principle is already found in Plotinus, *Enn.* VI 2 [43] 11.29–31 and in Porphy., *Sent.* 10 (Brisson).
73. (It should be noted that there may be a hierarchy within that order.) This principle has its roots in Anaxagoras and refers to a homoeomerous mixture. Examples are the true unity formed by the Henads *πάσαι...ἐν πάσαις*, and differing only in *idiotês*, *in Parm.* VI 1048.9–16; *in Tim.* I 17.30–18.3; 48.24–7; *in Crat.* § 139, as opposed to the Forms, which also interpenetrate, albeit not in essence but by each Form partaking in all others, *El. theol.* § 176, cf. *in Parm.* II 753.23–757.9; and Soul, which forms a homoeomerous or absolute ‘all in all’ of Same and Other, albeit in a divisible unity (‘whole of parts’), *in Tim.* II 166.15–167.9 (cf. 163.3–6 and 193.21–4); likewise, soul essentially participates in being, life, and intellect, ‘all in all and each separately’ (*El. theol.* § 197).
74. There is also a geometrical background: the most important mean is that of continuous geometrical proportion: in e.g. the series 2, 4, 8, i.e. the proportion 2:4::4:8, the mean term is also an extreme and vice versa. That is, we can convert the series while keeping the ratios (1:2 or 2:1), and make the extremes the mean terms: 4:8::2:4 (or 4:2::8:4). As a consequence, ‘all is in all’ in the sense that the middle (4) is also (in) beginning and end but standing in different ratios to the original beginning and end. For the elaboration of this example from *Tim.* 31c–32a, see Baltzly (2007: 74 n. 77).
75. A complicating factor is the distinction between being or actuality and potency (e.g. § 77). This distinction is used in a manner similar to what falls under the principle ‘all in all’ but with a more complex ontological background. We will not discuss it here.
76. The most common linguistic means of expressing these manners or modes of being are adverbs.
77. Derived from *Soph.* 249a. On this triad, see Ch. 5. Note that Being-Life-Intellect is not the upper limit of the application of the principle. It holds for the gods, too. See *El. theol.* § 125 and § 142.

78. Cf. § 115; § 173; in *Tim.* II 26.25–8. See also Baltzly (2008: 397).
79. Of course, unparticipated intellect is (and hence knows) everything but not in the same manner as participated intellect, § 170.
80. *Πᾶσα ψυχὴ πάντα ἐστὶ τὰ πράγματα, παραδειγματικῶς μὲν τὰ αἰσθητά, εἰκονικῶς δὲ τὰ νοητά.* On this proposition, see also Baltzly (2008: 397).
81. On Soul and the sensible world, see Chs 6 and 7 respectively.
82. See Ch. 9 in this volume.
83. Very clearly explained in *in Parm.* IV 903.2–904.26. For a clear interpretation and contextualization, see d’Hoine (2011a: esp. 284 ff.). A nice way of looking at this is that there is only Being (and what is above Being), manifesting itself in different modes, Baltzly (2008: 399), cf. Siorvanes (1996: 126). This may sound drastic, but it can be better understood when one considers that, for Proclus, the genus pre-contains all the species. For example, the idea of ‘figure’ contains all the different kinds of figures and is present in each of them in an appropriate manner (*οἰκείως*), as a consequence, all figures are also present in all others (*πάντα τε ταῦτα ἐν πᾶσιν*, in *Eucl.* 143.21–145.11)—presumably qua figure. Cf. in *Eucl.* 55.23–56.4.
84. In *Tim.* II 275.6–13, although Proclus is here presenting Theodorus’ views on the *Tim.* 36d.
85. For the latter, see e.g. in *Alc.* 87.13–17.
86. In *Tim.* II 43.20–44.24. Cf. II 88.13–31. On the ‘modal Elements’, as Siorvanes calls them, in these and similar passages, see Siorvanes (1996: 232–41).
87. In *Tim.* II 26.22–27.7; 28.1–7. Very concretely, insofar as fire is tangible, it must participate in earth.
88. See the beginning of *De sacrificio et magia* 148.3–10 (Bidez). On theurgy and astrology, see respectively Chs 11 and 1 in this volume.
89. Cf. in *Parm.* IV 956.24–957.21, on different manners of knowing by different cognitive capacities; and in *Tim.* I 352.11–19, where the adverbs used instead do not express different epistemic modes but modes relating to an essential property of the knower (unifically, wholly, universally, figuratively, sensitively).
90. See Gersh (1973: 122) for a tentative explanation of Proclus’ theory of motion in the spiritual realm as an attempt to rationalize the mystic’s ‘simultaneous affirmation of opposites or contradictories’. We take ‘rationalize’ here to mean ‘rationally explain’, rather than the pejorative ‘explain away rationally’.
91. On this topic, see Ch. 13 in this volume.
92. In *Eucl.* 26.10–27.10 and second prologue, chapter 7 (71.27 ff.).
93. Another one being, of course, Aristotle’s ideal of scientific knowledge.
94. On this topic see Gerson (1997: 22–5).
95. Baltzly (2007: 15). See also Martijn (2010a: 190). On causation, parallelism of structure, and analogy, see Gersh (1973: 85–6), cf. Opsomer (2000b: 358).
96. Martijn (2014); Gersh (1973: 85–6).
97. For more examples, see Martijn (2014).
98. *Theol. plat.* I 1, 5.1–12. See also Chs 2 and 10 in this volume and Saffrey (1992a).
99. See e.g. Dodds (1963), Beierwaltes (1987: 364), and Remes (2008: 28). Cf. Chlup (2012: 11).

100. See Van Riel (2009) on Proclus' different kinds of matter and Opsomer (2003) on the many demiurges.
101. For the former, see Ch. 4; for the latter, see Chlup (2012: 124).
102. Cf. Ch. 4, section 4.5, in this volume, and Chlup (2012: 127). Steel (2010) points out that the 'sober and rational' character of the *El. theol.* does not do justice to Proclus' demand to always combine rational thought with religious piety. For a discussion of the role of pagan divinities in Proclus' work, see Ch. 10 in this volume.
103. Inspired by *Thet.* 173e6 and discussed at *in Tim.* I 202.15–16; III 277; *in Parm.* III 828.19–28; *Hyp.* I 1.
104. Considering the complexity of the system, we may safely assume that Proclus must have had his reasons for not filling in all the details. It must be said, however, that not everything Proclus wrote is extant, and that especially parts of what he wrote on the lower parts of the metaphysical hierarchy, the sensible world, are lost. This may be the reason for little holes in the bottom of the system.
105. These and similar holes in the system are indicated by the questions marks in Lowry (1980: 103) and Chlup (2012: 123). Cf. also Siorvanes (1996: 137–8) on the monad of nature/body, with Martijn (2010a: 38 ff.).
106. On the principle of contradiction in Proclus, see Steel (1999); Steel (2003a); Napoli (2006).
107. For work arguing in favour of the originality of certain parts of Proclus' system, see e.g. Perkams (2006).
108. We would like to thank the participants of the conference 'Proclus: Expanding the Canon of Ancient Philosophy' for their valuable comments and suggestions, esp. Gwenaëlle Aubry, Christian Wildberg, and Frans de Haas; we would also like to thank Olga Lizzini and Wouter Goris. Martijn's work on this chapter was made possible by a grant from NWO (Netherlands Organisation for Scientific Research, Veni 275-20-020).

## The One, the Henads, and the Principles\*

*Gerd Van Riel*

When Proclus came to write his fully systematized version of Neoplatonism, the Neoplatonic school had spent more than 200 years chiselling and refining the initial basic assumptions laid down by Plotinus. Since Neoplatonism is buoyed by the acceptance of intelligible principles, and of a single ‘first’ principle in particular, it is to be expected that most of the chiselling work would have been invested in a further elucidation of these highest levels of reality. And, indeed, from Proclus’ own presentation of the evolution within the school (‘our common hearth’: Procl., *Theol. plat.* I 7, 31.7–14), or the debates concerning the overall interpretation of Plato’s *Parmenides* (Procl., in *Parm.* VI 1051.26–1064.14), it becomes clear that every generation, or indeed every single Neoplatonist, had a contribution to make to the speculation about the highest principles. Nevertheless from those surveys also emerges a clear view on what was considered to be (Neo-)Platonic orthodoxy, whereby Proclus took on the task of providing a well-founded analysis of all aspects of the system.<sup>1</sup>

Throughout these discussions and refinements, the basic ideas remained intact. All Neoplatonists remained true to the Plotinian insight that the first principle of reality was to be described using two Platonic notions: the ‘One’ as analysed in Plato’s *Parmenides* (from 137c onwards), and the ‘Good’, as laid down by Plato in the *Republic* (VI 508e–509c). On the other hand, one specific element came to the fore in post-Plotinian Neoplatonism that was to change the nature of the speculation. Plotinus had notoriously stated that there are no more or less than three principles (*archai*) or hypostases: the One, the Intellect, and the Soul. According to him, the account of the principles is thereby fixed (Plot., *Enn.* II 9 [33] 1.12–16). Yet, almost immediately after Plotinus, the Neoplatonists came to realize that, as ‘the procession of reality does not allow for empty places’,<sup>2</sup> there was a need to refine the account of the principles by arguing for intermediary stages through which the unity of the principle gradually develops into a multiplicity. This endeavour began with

Iamblichus, who made a distinction on the level of the Intellect, between the intelligible (the intellect as contemplated) and the intellective (the intellect as contemplating), and also introduced a distinction on the level of the One, between the first principle as Ineffable (as transcendent vis-à-vis all reality), and the first principle as the One (as the true first cause of the universe). At the same time, because the school had moved towards the genre of the commentary as the main vehicle for philosophical investigation, the hierarchy of the principles was linked to a thoroughly systematized reading of the *Parmenides*. With Syrianus (Proclus' teacher), the Neoplatonic school came to the insight that the structure of the intelligible world could be deduced from what was known as the *Parmenides*' second hypothesis (supposing that the one *is*, what follows for things other than the one? *Parm.* 142b–155e). The idea was that any deduction (and the second hypothesis of the *Parmenides* contains fourteen deductions) constitutes a specific level of intelligible reality. The unity of the intelligible was now broken up into a succession of fourteen subsequent levels in which reality smoothly develops itself.

#### 4.1. THE TRANSCENDENCE OF THE FIRST PRINCIPLE

This was, in broad outline, the situation when Proclus took up the analysis of the first principles. In his *Theologia platonica* III 7, he presents a synthesis that is worth quoting as an introduction to the matter:

Prior to all things and even to the gods who produce the things, [Plato] posited one single transcendent and unparticipated cause (*ἀμέθεκτος αἰτία*), unsayable to all discourse and unspeakable, unknowable to all knowledge and ungraspable; it reveals all things out of itself, it precedes all things in an ineffable way, it turns all things towards itself, and is the best goal for all things. This cause, then, that really surpasses all things by being separate from them, and produces, in a unitary way, all the henads of the divine things, all the classes of being, and their processions, this cause is called 'the Good' by Socrates in the *Republic*: on the basis of the analogy with the sun, he reveals its wondrous and unknowable transcendence towards all intelligible things. Parmenides, on the other hand, calls it 'One': on the basis of the negations he indicates the transcendent and ineffable existence of this One as the cause of all being. The discourse in the *Letter to Dionysius*,<sup>3</sup> which proceeds in riddles, praises it as the cause 'around which all things exist' and as 'the cause of all things beautiful'. In the *Philebus*, Socrates speaks well of it as the 'generatrix' (*ὑπόστασις*) of all things, because it is the cause of all divinity, for indeed, all gods owe their being god to this first god.

(Procl., *Theol. plat.* III 7, 29.10–30.2)<sup>4</sup>

This text provides the entire framework for the discussion of the principles. The first principle in itself remains fully transcendent and ineffable, unattainable through our notions and thought. As Proclus adds:

we must honour this cause by silence, and by the unity that precedes silence, so that it may shine upon our souls the appropriate share of the mystic goal.

(Procl., *Theol. plat.* III 7, 30.7–10)

Yet Plato handed down to us a certain discourse by which we can somehow reveal the nature of this first principle: as ‘One’, ‘Good’, the ‘Cause’, or ‘the cause of divinity’. The first two concepts especially, the One and the Good, prove fruitful in this paradoxical endeavour to thematize the unspeakable. As J. Trouillard (1972: 86–7) characterizes them, the One and the Good are *functional names* (‘des noms fonctionnels’) that reveal the articulation of our concepts rather than that of the reality we use them to speak about. Proclus himself indicates this in the following way:

Given that the unknowability of things exists according to their union with the First, we do not attempt to know it or to clarify it by using a name. Yet, since we are more capable of looking at their procession and their return, we attribute two names to the first, taking them as images (*ἁγάλματα*) from its effects, and we define two modes of ascending to the First: on the one hand, by the name of ‘the Good’, we apply the mode of analogy, on the other, by the name of ‘the One’, we apply the mode of negation. (Procl., *Theol. plat.* II 6, 42.16–24)

With the notion of the ‘One’, we enter the stage of a negative theology as founded, or so the Neoplatonists maintain, by Plato in the first hypothesis of the *Parmenides*. Here Plato asks, if the one is one, then what can we deduce about this one? (*Parm.* 137c–142a). The final consequence, as Plato himself indicates, is that we cannot even call this one a ‘One’, because this would introduce some kind of positive attribution of a name, setting apart this one from other things, and thus, introducing some kind of relation to those other things. This would in the end jeopardize the uniqueness of this principle and destroy its transcendence. Hence, the first hypothesis ends in a desperate negation, the acknowledgement of the impossibility of pursuing this kind of discourse:

Therefore it is not named or spoken of, nor is it the object of opinion or knowledge, nor does anything that is perceive it. – It seems not. – Is it possible that these things are so for the one? – I certainly don’t think so.

(Plato, *Parm.* 142a4–8; tr. Gill and Ryan)

To the Neoplatonists, this negation is not an absurdity but rather the final recognition of the insufficient nature of any kind of determination of the absolute one. Hence, the best way to speak about this principle is indeed the *via negationis*. Taken in its final sense, the ‘One’ is a negative determination of



this principle: absolute unity requires the removal of all plurality and, hence, of all positive determination.<sup>5</sup> The difficulty of this position lies in the paradoxical claim that the first principle of reality is one and not one at the same time. For that reason, some Neoplatonists, like a certain Origen (whose position is discussed by Proclus at *Theol. plat.* II 4), concluded that this principle should be seen as 'inexistent' (ἀνύπαρκτον τὸ ἐν καὶ ἀνυπόστατον; *Theol. plat.* II 4, 31.15–16) and that, consequently, the Intellect should be taken as the highest principle and as the first 'one'. Yet, Proclus replies, if the Intellect is a unity—which it is—then this can only mean that the One transcends the Intellect since Intellect in itself would require a principle to be unified. And even though that first principle cannot be determined any further, it should be seen as constitutive of all reality, as all that is can only exist as a unity.

We are facing a classic dilemma here of rendering an incomplete (but as such the only possible) description of the highest principle on the basis of its effects, versus a complete (but impossible) description of the highest principle in itself. All Neoplatonists had to face this dilemma, and if Origen took the simple way out by deleting the highest principle, others, like Iamblichus and Damascius, tried to escape by introducing a sophisticated twist to the system. Instead of leaving open the double nature of the 'One' as a cause and as an ineffable unit, they distinguished between the First (the Ineffable) and the One as two separate principles. The One is then 'freed' from this completely ungraspable nature, and becomes the first true cause, or the first genuine 'principle' of reality, whereas the First remains totally ineffable, as that which grounds the One but cannot be determined any further. Proclus' position is, in a sense, more precarious and more difficult to maintain. He combines ineffability and causality within one single principle and thus forces himself to express contradictory claims about the One.

Yet there are reasons to believe that, philosophically speaking, Proclus' solution is the stronger one. First, one could wonder what the 'Ineffable' as a principle adds to the analysis. In fact, even though Damascius would avoid this, it tends to reify the Ineffable into being a separate unity, or a 'principle' beyond the One. When looked at from this angle, the contribution delivered by this additional principle is in fact a reinforcement of the problem: instead of safeguarding the Ineffable from determination, one adds the need to determine it as a separate entity. Second, the problem to which this solution is supposed to give an answer will return after all: Damascius' treatise on *Problems and Solutions about the Principles* opens with a discussion of the paradox that the first principle of all things cannot be called a principle since that would co-ordinate it with reality. Calling it 'Ineffable' detaches it from this determination as a principle. But a few pages further, Damascius has to admit that even calling it 'Ineffable' is attributing too much of a determination to it (Dam., *De princ.* I 8.12–20). That is to say, detaching the First from the One opens the way to an infinite regress in which the ineffability of the principle

should always lead to dissatisfaction about even calling it 'ineffable'. If that means that one has to posit a principle beyond the one that is discovered to be ineffable, there is no limit to the exercise (the problem will return at every additional level). Proclus' answer has the advantage of putting this infinite regress to a stop before even yielding to it. To him, the recognition of the One's ineffability suffices to indicate the limits of speculation, even though this means that the One as a cause and the One as ineffable are held together in a difficult tension. The best way of dealing with the dilemma is by maintaining the viewpoint that the 'One' is in itself a negative determination, escaping any characterization but that, as a principle, it causes unity. That is, it is not really a cause since it basically only repeats itself. But even then, calling it 'a cause' would imply some kind of relationship to other things (which is impossible in the case of the One). The only fruitful way to call it 'a cause' is to look at it from below, as that on which all things depend for their (unitary) existence. As already indicated, this is not a description of the One *per se* but *ex effectibus*.

Proclus is going to make broad use of this distinction by applying the Platonic scheme of viewing intelligible things as unparticipated (i.e. *per se*), which return at a subsequent level as *participated* entities (i.e. *in their effects*). The subsequent level thus participates in the former one, whereby the *participating* being now posits itself as an unparticipated existence, to be participated in at the next level, and so on. We shall return to this scheme later on.

After all, because the name of 'the One' is primordially negative, it suffices to suggest the One's transcendent nature:

It is better, as Plato did, to stick to the negations and to indicate through them the transcendent superiority of the One, namely, that it is not intelligible nor intellectual nor any other of those things that we cognize by our pluralized conceptualization (*δὲ ἐπιβολῆς μεριστῆς*). For, since the One is the cause of all things, it is nothing of all things. (Procl., in *Parm.* VI 1108.16–20)

The same holds true, *mutatis mutandis*, for that other 'functional name' attributed to the first principle: the 'Good'. This name is not inspired by negations but by analogy and, more precisely, by Plato's analogy of the sun, which eventually leads to the famous recognition that 'the Good transcends being' (*Resp.* VI 509b9). Unlike the way of negation, the way of analogy proceeds by emphasizing a certain kind of kinship between the effect and its cause. Starting from every being's natural desire for the good, we gain the notion of the absolute Good, and hence, we come to a characterization of the cause of all things as 'the Good'.

This procedure of analogy still presupposes the transcendence of the principle as laid out by the way of negation (which explains why the way of negation, and the name of 'the One', has priority): the kinship of the effect to the cause can only be truly acknowledged if one recognizes the 'higher' status (or the transcendence) of the cause over against the effect. This

coincidence of transcendence and kinship underlies any causal relationship. Proclus brings this up by referring to the scheme of 'procession' (*proodos*) and 'remaining' (*monê*)—procession being the element that presupposes the transcendence of the cause, and remaining referring to the kinship: 'All that is immediately produced by any cause both remains in it and proceeds from it' (Procl., *El. theol.* § 30, 34.12–13).<sup>6</sup>

This may seem to entail that, to the Neoplatonists, when one refers to the three traditional approaches to the conception of god, a true *via eminentiae* (way of eminence) is not conceivable as a third option apart from the *via negationis* (way of negation) and the *via analogiae* (way of analogy). As H. D. Saffrey points out, this third way, which consists in pointing out the eminence of a certain characteristic and attributing it to the highest one, requires an *ousiologia*, a real way of talking about a principle that *is* and to which characteristics can be attributed in a meaningful way. Since this is not the case with the Neoplatonic first principle, this way seems to be closed indeed.<sup>7</sup>

Yet there is a certain validity in a way of eminence in the case of the Neoplatonists, which is closely linked to the way of negation. The names of 'One' and 'Good' are defective ways of saying the unsayable. At the same time, however, saying that the ultimate principle is 'not One' or 'not Good' suggests, at the very least, that goodness and unity are reliable tokens or signals under way that point in the direction of where the highest principle is to be found. Saying that the principle is 'higher than evil' or 'higher than quantitative bulk' would be pointless from this perspective, as this does not give any relevant information about how to find this 'higher' reality. Yet, in the case of 'higher than One' or 'higher than Good', the qualification does become relevant. That which is denied then becomes a meaningful landmark in our quest for the principle.

This insight has important repercussions. In the first place, it indicates that the highest principle is, in a certain mysterious way, the transcendent source of goodness and unity, just as the *via eminentiae* of Christian theologians would have it. Proclus often uses this type of vocabulary, combining analogy and negation (see e.g. Procl., *Theol. plat.* III 2, 7.21–7). Every being is caused by its 'source' (*pêgê*). If, for instance, we ascend from the particular and dissipated instantiations of beauty or likeness towards the Beautiful in itself or the Like in itself, we do not need to know what the latter are in themselves: it suffices if we can indicate them as sources of the beautiful or of likeness (Procl., *in Parm.* VI 1108.23–8). The way to that source is the same as the way of negation, for the cause is not part of the things it produces. This holds true particularly for the first cause. One can indicate it as 'divinity in itself' (*autotheos*) since every single divinity proceeds from it, but even that name contains too much of an affirmation: 'If at all we need to say something affirmative about the First principle, I think it is better to follow Plato's

preference, by calling it “the source of all divinity”, than to call it otherwise’ (Procl., in *Parm.* VI 1109.4–6). This does not entail any positive denotation of the principle’s nature but allows one to discuss it ‘as the principle and cause of all things, as the goal of all things and the object of desire for all’ (in *Parm.* VI 1109.7–8). Elsewhere, Proclus quotes the Chaldaean formula of ‘source of sources’ (*pêgê pêgôn*; in *Tim.* I 451.17–18; *Theol. plat.* III 7, 30.3–10), which stresses even more the ascent from effects to cause without ever grasping the cause in itself.

Thus, the denotation of the First as the ‘source’ or the ‘cause’ reveals a certain *via eminentiae*, presenting the First principle as the transcendent origin of all things. Its effects display the characteristics that the cause has in an eminent way, even though these characteristics are only indirect and less austere manifestations of the highest principle. In that sense, the Neoplatonic *via eminentiae* is based on the *via negationis*. Typically, a cause is nothing of the things it produces (see Procl., in *Parm.* VI 1075.23), and the eminence of the cause can only be shown by way of negation (*αἰτίας δηλοῦσιν ὑπεροχὴν*; in *Parm.* VI 1076.8–9). The thesis that the One is the ‘Cause’ is interchangeable with the characterization of the One as ‘Nothing’.<sup>8</sup> As Proclus himself says:

As far as I am concerned, I have the impression that, by this second mode [i.e. the way of negation], Plato reveals the procession of all other things out of the First, and primordially the procession of the divine realms. On the basis of that, the First is transcendent to all the things it produces because a cause always surpasses its effects. And on the basis of that, it is nothing of all things, as everything proceeds from it. (Procl., *Theol. plat.* II 5, 37.19–25)

Even though this connection between the negations and the order of procession may be a token of the transcendence of the First, it also gives another important clue concerning the *via negationis*. The order of the negations is not random; to the contrary, it reveals the order of procession. The nothingness of the First requires that we deny all characteristics, yet denying them affirms each of them *as a characteristic*. In other words: one can only deny that which presents itself as a valid candidate for denial. The later something is denied the better or more worthy its position in the order of things, and the final negations bring us closest to the First. Thus, the affirmations about the principle (which form the subject matter of the second hypothesis of the *Parmenides*) are in fact generated by the negations: ‘As the One is the cause of everything, so are the negations the cause of the affirmations.’<sup>9</sup> Hence, the discourse that tries to grasp this transcendent cause is engaged in a constant conflict with itself:

It does not come as a surprise, then, that those who want to know the ineffable by reason render reason itself impossible: any knowledge that tries to grasp an object to which it is not connected, destroys its own power. If, for example, we were to say about sense-perception that it connects to the object of knowledge, it would

make itself impossible, and [the same would happen to] knowledge if [we were to say that] it connects to the intelligible, and likewise with all other forms of cognition. So, if there would be a rational account of the ineffable, it would constantly undermine itself and be in conflict with itself.

(Procl., *Theol. plat.* II 10, 64.2–9)

On the one hand, one needs to recognize that this First principle transcends all discourse and all concepts. On the other hand, however, reason cannot but consider this principle to be the first and eminent source of all reality. Despite the enormously heavy emphasis that Proclus lays on the unknowability and transcendence of the One as discussed in the first hypothesis of the *Parmenides*, he can still maintain that this hypothesis is about the first god and specifically about ‘how this god produces and sets in order (διακοσμεῖ) all classes of gods’ (Procl., in *Parm.* VI 1063.16–17).

#### 4.2. THE FIRST PRINCIPLE AS A CAUSE

When discussing the First principle, we need to confine ourselves to using negations. Yet despite themselves, the negations reveal a productive principle, in that they show the First as a transcendent cause of those things that are denied of it. As a consequence, the notion of ‘cause’ is infected with the same ambiguity. It is a reliable description insofar as it expresses the relation of the effects to the principle, but it is, nevertheless, still deficient: at *Theol. plat.* III 8 the First principle is said to be ‘transcending unity and the cause’.<sup>10</sup> If, then, we attribute the name of ‘cause’ to the principle, we actually use this word to denote the absence of that which produces things. Yet the term does have positive connotations as well: all of reality is seen as the ‘effect’ of the First principle. But how can we say that the cause *produces* things? Proclus is very explicit in denying that the First principle would display any activity:

Some say it is necessary for the First to display an activity (ἐνεργεῖν) towards its effects. It gives unity to all things and is the cause of all participated unitary forms in beings. What, then, would prevent one from calling exactly this activity a ‘movement’? Well, I say one must not make activity (ἐνέργεια) precede being, nor ascribe any kind of activity to the First. (Procl., in *Parm.* VII 1167.12–17)

The reason why Proclus denies this so emphatically is not too farfetched. Not only would the introduction of *energeia* be doing away with the First’s unity; one should also realize that any activity presupposes a power (*dunamis*). This would not necessarily make the First principle potential in the Aristotelian sense—as we will see, the Neoplatonists introduced a notion of *dunamis* as active or generative power. But it would still mean that introducing an *energeia*

entails introducing a *dunamis* that would definitely be too much of a plurality to attribute to the First principle (cf. Procl., in *Parm.* VII 1167.17–21).

What way of producing, then, should we ascribe to this principle? Proclus conceives of a form of producing that is superior to the production by displaying an activity, namely, that of ‘producing by the mere fact of being’ (τὸ τῷ εἶναι μόνῳ παράγειν: Procl., in *Parm.* VII 1167.30). This means that the principle produces, without actually being occupied with production (ἄπραγμόν ἐστι ποιήσεως: in *Parm.* VII 1167.31). Without any preoccupation with lower reality, the First still brings forth this reality, by giving unity to every existing thing (cf. Trouillard 1958). Through its being one, all things get their unity—and, as we shall see, unity is the condition for separate existence (*huparxis*).<sup>11</sup>

This brings Proclus close to the Aristotelian analysis of the first cause of motion, which does not interact with things but sets them into motion as the object of desire (Ar., *Met. A*, 1072b1–4). Proclus acknowledges this analysis of the first cause in terms of final causality, as this allows one to thematize production by attributing an activity not to the producer but to the produced. The scheme is thus reversed: the effects are the active pole in causality because they tend towards the First, rather than vice versa (Procl., in *Parm.* VII 1169.4–11). That is to say, final causality is not so much the explanation of procession as it is the explanation of the universal reversion of things towards the principle. Yet, since reversion follows the same stages as procession, one can deduce the levels of procession from this causal scheme.

This Aristotelian theme of final causality is not the only way of speaking about the productivity of the First principle, however. Since all Platonism implies that intelligible principles are true causes, the Neoplatonists could not describe any principle without attributing efficient causality to it. So, despite the lack of activity of the First, there must be some way of explaining its efficient nature. In order to do this, the Neoplatonists used the metaphor of the superabundance of the principle by which it produces without any voluntary act. The final cause, in its completeness, perfection, and fullness, that is, in its Goodness, is, as it were, overflowing. Goodness is always productive: if something is not productive, it cannot be good:

It is the mark of goodness to bestow on all that can receive, and the highest is not that which has the form of goodness but that which does good (τὸ μέγιστόν ἐστιν οὐ τὸ ἀγαθοειδές, ἀλλὰ τὸ ἀγαθουργόν). (Procl., *El. theol.* § 122, 108.19–21)

Indeed, the ‘Good’ is the name we attribute to that which gives its gifts to lower reality. The entire procession of reality starts from this *diffusivum sui* of the Good in a specific way: every level of reality is the unfolding of something that was present at the higher level in a hidden way (*kruphiōs*). This means that that which is unfolded lies, as it were, compressed within the higher unity and returns in a decompressed way at the subsequent level:

The manifold exists in a hidden and undistinguished way in the first principles, but in a distinct way in the lower things. The more a being is related to the one, the more it hides multiplicity and the more it is defined according to unity only.  
(Procl., *Theol. plat.* III 9, 39.20–4)

Proclus uses the language of ‘manifesting’ or ‘revealing’ that which was hidden higher up: he sees the lower as an *ekphansis* (manifestation) of the higher, and the verb *ekphainein* (lit. ‘to manifest’) is often used in the sense of ‘to produce’.<sup>12</sup> The transition from hidden multiplicity to genuine distinction takes place in the procession from the intelligible to the intellectual world. At this level, the multiplicity of the Platonic Forms reveals itself (Procl., *in Parm.* IV 973.14–16), and before it (i.e. in the intelligible world and the First principle) there was no real distinction (Procl., *Theol. plat.* III 3, 12.23–13.1). Yet even the intellectual realm does not display a totally distinct plurality. The Forms present themselves first as one whole: the World of Forms as a totality where the Forms do not yet exist separately. The true distinction of the Forms occurs only at the level of the human soul (Procl., *in Parm.* III 808.4–10). Proclus nicely summarizes the different stages of unity: the first One is only one (*hen monon esti*) and transcends thinking; the Intellect thinks everything as a unity (*hôs hen*), and the soul views all things one by one (*kath’hen*; Procl., *in Parm.* III 808.10–17). That is to say, our soul will never ascend to total unity; we are destined to envisage the different forms in a discursive way.<sup>13</sup>

#### 4.3. THE TRIADIC STRUCTURE OF BEINGS

To explain how this process of multiplication takes place, Iamblichus introduced a pair of principles: Limit (*peras*) and the Unlimited (*apeiron*), derived from Plato’s *Philebus* (and taken up in the Pythagoreanizing reading of Plato to which Iamblichus subscribed; cf. O’Meara 1989). Proclus shares these views, starting from the premise that the First principle does not actually ‘produce’ things (as we have seen earlier). So, to explain the existence of plurality, one needs an account of principles that govern the procession. The ‘Limit’ and the ‘Unlimited’ are, or so Proclus believes, well designed to fulfil this task.

The principle of the Limit is that which isolates every being, circumscribes it, and places it within its proper boundaries (Procl., *in Crat.* § 42, 13.21–6). Thus, it is the first principle that really bestows this demarcation upon beings (the First remaining transcendent). In that sense, it allows things to exist separately and thus causes the separate existence (*huparxis*) of things (Procl., *in Tim.* III 176.1).<sup>14</sup> Without boundaries or limit, a thing cannot exist. That means that *peras* is a unifying principle—in fact, *peras* is the first true one, the first principle that actually brings forth unity (or rather: transmits the unity

from the transcendent principle onto beings). The name of 'One', which could not be attributed to the First principle unless in a defective and metaphorical way, can now be genuinely predicated of this principle of Limit, and the negations regarding the First principle can now be turned into affirmations. In this respect, the following text is of crucial importance for a good understanding of the 'Limit' as well as of the 'Unlimited':

For the First is not really one, as it transcends even the One. Where is the One in the genuine sense of the word to be located? There is a one before being, which brings forth being and which is its cause in a primordial sense—for the principle beyond that was transcendent, it transcended unity as well as the cause; it did not have any relationship to the universe, and it was unparticipated, elevated above all things. If, then, this one is the cause and producer of being, there must be a power in it that is generative of being. For every productive principle produces in accordance with its proper force, which is to be situated in between the producer and the produced as the former's procession and as it were extension, and the latter's presiding generative cause. For, indeed, being, which is produced by those principles and is not the one-in-itself but bears the one in itself as a form, has received its procession out of the one from the power (which produces being and reveals it from the One), and it has its hidden unity from the existence of the One. Well then, this One, which precedes the power, and which comes to be as the first pre-existent effect of the unparticipated and unknowable cause of all things, is what Socrates in the *Philebus* calls 'the Limit', whereas the power that is generative of being is called 'the Unlimited'. (*Theol. plat.* III 8, 31.12–32.5)

Hence, Limit (*peras*) is the first genuine One, which by its presence delineates the separate existence of beings.<sup>15</sup> It provides beings with a 'remaining identity' (*monimos idiotês*)<sup>16</sup> and thus guarantees that the effect will remain in its cause (*monê*): the conservation of unity within multiplicity at all levels of reality (*Theol. plat.* III 8, 32.15–16 and 23–5).

Yet, again, this One-Limit is not productive in itself. The procession (*proodos*) is a process of differentiation, whereas it is only the principle of identity that we have discovered thus far. The explanation of the procession requires a new principle, a generative power that will work along with the Limit in the constitution of the universe. This is the task of the Unlimited (*apeiron*), interpreted as the generative power (*gennêtikê dunamis*) that makes things productive.

The connection between *apeiron* and *dunamis* is occasioned by the *Chaldaean Oracles*,<sup>17</sup> but there is also a more genuinely philosophical reason for this link. The Neoplatonists interpreted the term *dunamis* in a kind of reversed Aristotelian scheme: whereas in Aristotle *dunamis* (potentiality) refers to sheer receptivity or passivity, the Neoplatonists took the passive *dunamis* (which is inherent in matter) to be a mirrored shadowing of the *dunamis* at the level of the principles, where an active *dunamis* is present as the principles' productive power. Thus, the *dunamis* at the highest level implies the potential presence of



plurality, which we thematized earlier on as the 'hidden' plurality. In that sense, the new interpretation has conserved an aspect of Aristotelian potentiality but from a reversed angle: in the case of plurality, potentiality is in fact more elevated (because of its unitary nature) than actuality.<sup>18</sup>

In the *Philebus*, limit and the unlimited function within a quadripartite scheme in which the 'cause' produces a 'combination' (*mikton*) of the two opposite principles. Since the cause is identified as the First principle, with the opposite principles below it, it is logical to say that 'being' (the monad of Being, i.e. the highest level of the intelligible world)<sup>19</sup> is the first *mikton*. Yet in Proclus' system, the operation of the two opposite principles does not stop there. In fact, any being, every level of being, is a *mikton* of Limit and the Unlimited. Hence, all levels in reality, from the very top to the very bottom, display a duality of Limit and the Unlimited. Put differently, Limit and the Unlimited both have their proper series (*seira* or *sustoichia*), the limit-like characteristics (i.e. unity, proper existence, determination) of any being belonging to the series of Limit, and the characteristics of the unlimited (i.e. power, potency, lack of determination) belonging to the series of the Unlimited.<sup>20</sup>

Thus, the unity of the highest goes together with potential plurality. This *dunamis* is most prominent at the highest level. Therefore, the higher levels can be said to be 'more dynamic' and even 'more infinite (unlimited)' than the lower ones: 'A more unified power is always more infinite (*apeirotēra*) than a power that pluralizes itself' (Procl., *El. theol.* § 95, 84.28–9). The arguments adduced in support of this proposition are a reminder of *El. theol.* § 86, which points out that, when something is divided or multiplied, the *dunamis* is multiplied across the different members. When divided, the *dunamis* is enfeebled; when multiplied, it loses its unity. Yet how can something be 'more infinite' than something else? The explanation lies in the hierarchical structure of the universe: 'All unlimitedness (*to apeiron*) in things that have being is unlimited neither to the superior orders nor to itself' (Procl., *El. theol.* § 93, 84.1–2, tr. Dodds, modified). This relative infinity follows immediately from the explanation of the procession: the higher produces the lower, not out of any 'will' to produce but because of the superabundance of its power (*dunameōs periousia* or *dunameōs huperbolē*).<sup>21</sup> This superabundant power of a higher level is impervious to the lower levels, as the lower always displays an increasing actual multiplicity that prevents it from grasping the comprehensive potency of the higher all at once. Hence, the higher is more infinite than the lower, and the highest stages of the procession consist of a chain of successive infinite powers. Every being is brought about by the infinite power of the higher and posits itself as an infinite power with respect to the subsequent stages.

In this way, Proclus can argue for the coexistence of unity and multiplicity in the procession, which gradually develops itself without ruptures or sudden multiplications. Yet the opposition of principles at this high a stage of reality

will elicit a severe critique from Damascius, who cannot accept this kind of multiplicity immediately below the First principle. It is not clear how the principle of Unity would lack the power to unite the opposite principles. As a consequence, in Damascius' view, Limit and the Unlimited cannot be opposed to one another on the same level, as simultaneously coexistent and yet opposed. Rather, he wants to view the operation of these principles as a self-development of the One in a vertical hierarchy of principles (Dam., *De princ.* II 15.1–31.6). This critique may be justified, but it should not obscure the fact that Proclus has obviously raised this question himself and that his answer is more nuanced than what Damascius allows to be seen. The key to this nuance lies in Proclus' statement that the unlimited power is always inherent in the existence delimited by Limit. One could refer to a number of passages where Proclus argues for the ontological priority of Limit over against *dunamis*.<sup>22</sup> The Unlimited presupposes the determined existence of a thing (i.e. Limit) as its bearer:

Such is, then, the first triad of intelligible things, according to Socrates in the *Philebus*: Limit, the Unlimited <and the Mixture>. Of those, the Limit is a god who proceeds at the head of the intelligible from the unparticipated and first god; it gives measure and determination to all things.... The Unlimited is the inexhaustible power (*δύναμις ἀνέκλειπτος*) of that god.

(Procl., *Theol. plat.* III 12, 44.22–45.4)

This means, then, that the opposition between the principles is more subtle than one might suppose at first glance. The Unlimited is the inherent power that lies encompassed within the existence demarcated by Limit. Moreover, at the intelligible level, those principles are not really distinct: since there are no distinctions yet at this level, the unlimited power should be seen as identical with the existence of intelligible beings. Our reason tears things apart in opposed terms since we need to proceed on the basis of distinct concepts.

With that caveat, all beings can be seen as triadic (*peras/huparxis—apeiron/dunamis—mikton/on*). A typical feature of this explanation is that, unlike Plato's suggestion in the *Philebus*, Proclus does not consider the mixture (*mikton*) to be a principle of its own: the principle of the combination is always the 'cause', and there is no need for a further principle of mixture. That is, at all levels, the mixture is the effect of the operation of the principles: it is 'made by' the One, whereas the two opposite principles are 'manifestations of' the One:

To the extent that 'making' (*ποιεῖν*) is inferior to 'manifesting' (*ἐκφαλίνειν*), and that 'generation' (*γέννησις*) is inferior to 'revelation' (*ἐκφανσις*), to that extent the mixture has received an inferior procession in comparison to that of the two principles. (Procl., *Theol. plat.* III 9, 36.16–19)

This indicates an essential difference between the mixture and the principles: the two principles are virtually identical with the First principle, manifesting its presence through their operation, whereas the mixture is a *product* of the

principles. The inference is clearly that the mixture does not possess its own operation as a principle that would set forth the combination of the two principles. Rather, this combination is reinstalled at all levels by the cause, the limit, and the unlimited themselves. As a corollary to this, Proclus holds that limit and unlimited exist in a twofold way: as principles before the mixture and as ingredients within the mixture (Procl., *Theol. plat.* III 10, 42.13–26).

Even though the mixture is the effect of the principles and not a principle itself, every mixture acts nonetheless as a cause upon lower reality. The intelligible mixture, for instance, ‘causes the world of genesis and its mixed nature’ (*Theol. plat.* III 10, 41.16–17). This causality rests on the central claim that every level contains in itself, in a more unified way, all that will subsequently develop. Porphyry had already applied the Anaxagorean principle of ‘All things are in everything’ (*panta en pasin*) to the Neoplatonic universe, by adding the qualification ‘though in a way that is appropriate to each thing’ (*oikeiôs de en hekastôi*) (Porph., *Sent.* 10.1): all things contain in themselves everything in accordance with the characteristics that prevail at that level of reality (cf. Procl., *El. theol.* § 103, 92.13).<sup>23</sup> Thus, the first Being will contain everything in the most unified way, which will then be decompressed at the following stages. At the highest levels of the intelligible, this triadic procession reveals itself in a structure that is derived from Plato’s *Sophist* (248e): the first mixture is Being as such (*ousia*), the second is Life (*zôê*), and the third is Intellect (*nous*). This can be schematized as follows:<sup>24</sup>

1 <sup>st</sup> triad:	<i>peras</i> <i>apeiron</i>	} <i>mikton</i> = <i>ousia</i> (dominant characteristic = <i>peras</i> )
2 <sup>nd</sup> triad:	<i>peras</i> <i>apeiron</i>	} <i>mikton</i> = <i>zôê</i> (dominant characteristic = <i>apeiron</i> )
3 <sup>rd</sup> triad:	<i>peras</i> <i>apeiron</i>	} <i>mikton</i> = <i>nous</i> (dominant characteristic = <i>mikton</i> )

**Schema 4.1.** Triadic procession at the higher levels of the intelligible.

Throughout this procession, every mixture (*mikton*) displays its own typical mode of being as a new combination of limit and the unlimited, and this mode of being will determine the development of the subsequent level. In that sense, the mixture does have a causal role to play.

## 4.4. THE STRUCTURE OF THE INTELLIGIBLE WORLD

The triadic account of the procession of beings brings us to the interpretation of the second hypothesis of Plato's *Parmenides* on the deductions from the supposition that the One is. In this hypothesis, the negations of the first hypothesis are taken up again, but they now return as attributes that can effectively be affirmed of the one. In Proclus' interpretation (which closely follows Syrianus' account), this hypothesis concerns the one-that-is (*to hen on*),<sup>25</sup> i.e. not the First principle but the realm of Being, which is 'one' in the sense that it takes its unity from the First cause. This realm of Being can be unravelled on the basis of the different conclusions (discussing different affirmations) of the second hypothesis, that is to say: the sequence of affirmations is a sequence of specific levels of being, through which the procession is realized by gradually adding more specificity (and thus plurality) to being. In this sequence, every level presupposes the preceding ones as the accumulated determination to which another step will be added. This procedure can be explained by stating that, at every stage, the newly reached characteristic posits itself as unparticipated (*amethekton*), i.e. as an absolute characteristic that determines the whole level. At the next stage, this characteristic returns as participated (*metechomemon*), which it will remain at all subsequent (cumulative) stages.

All of this can be schematized as follows:<sup>26</sup>

**Schema 4.2.** The Structure of the Intelligible World.

	Characteristic of the One-Being (ἐν ὄν)	Level of divine existence
1	(participated one +) unparticipated being (μετεχόμενον ἐν +) ἀμέθεκτον ὄν	1st level of intelligible gods (νοητοὶ θεοὶ) = Being (οὐσία)
2	(participated one + being +) unparticipated wholeness (μετεχόμενον ἐν + ὄν +) ἀμεθέκτη ὁλότης	2nd level of intelligible gods (νοητοὶ θεοὶ) = Life (ζωή)
3	(participated one + being + whole/life +) unparticipated plurality (μετεχόμενον ἐν + ὄν + ζωή +) ἀμέθεκτον πλῆθος	3rd level of intelligible gods (νοητοὶ θεοὶ) = Intellect (νοῦς)
4	(participated one + being + life + intellect +) unparticipated many (μετεχόμενον ἐν + ὄν + ζωή + νοῦς +) ἀμέθεκτα πολλά	1st level of intelligible-intellective gods (θεοὶ νοητοὶ καὶ νοεροὶ) = Divine Number (θεῖος ἀριθμός)
5	(participated one + being + ... + many +) unparticipated whole-parts (μετεχόμενον ἐν + ὄν + ... + πολλά +) ἀμέθεκτον ὅλον-μέρη	2nd level of νοητοὶ καὶ νοεροί

(continued)

## Schema 4.2. Continued

	Characteristic of the One-Being (ἐν ὄν)	Level of divine existence
6	(participated one + being + ... + whole-parts +) unparticipated shape (μετεχόμενον ἐν + ὄν + ... + ὅλον-μέρη +) ἀμέθεκτον σχῆμα	3rd level of νοητοὶ καὶ νοεροί
7	(participated one + being + ... + shape +) unparticipated in itself—in other (μετεχόμενον ἐν + ὄν + ... + σχῆμα +) ἀμέθεκτον ἐν αὐτῷ καὶ ἐν ἄλλῳ	1st level of intellective gods (νοεροὶ θεοί)
8	(participated one + being + ... + in itself—in other +) unparticipated moved and at rest (μετεχόμενον ἐν + ὄν + ... + ἐν αὐτῷ κ. ἐν ἄλλῳ +) ἀμέθεκτον κινούμενον καὶ ἐστώς	2nd level of intellective gods
9	(participated one + being + ... + moved and at rest +) unparticipated same and other (μετεχόμενον ἐν + ὄν + ... + κινούμενον καὶ ἐστώς +) ἀμέθεκτον ταὐτὸν καὶ ἕτερον	3rd level of intellective gods
10	(participated one + being + ... + same and other +) unparticipated like and unlike (μετεχόμενον ἐν + ὄν + ... + ταὐτὸν καὶ ἕτερον +) ἀμέθεκτον ὅμοιον καὶ ἀνόμοιον	hypercosmic gods
11	(participated one + being + ... + like and unlike +) unparticipated touching and separate (μετεχόμενον ἐν + ὄν + ... + ὅμοιον κ. ἀνόμοιον +) ἀμέθεκτον ἀπτόμενον καὶ ἀναφές	hypercosmic-encosmic gods
12	(participated one + being + ... + touching and separate +) unparticipated equal and unequal (μετεχόμενον ἐν + ὄν + ... + ἀπτόμενον καὶ ἀναφές +) ἀμέθεκτον ἴσον καὶ ἄνισον	encosmic gods
13	(participated one + being + ... + equal and unequal +) unparticipated being that partakes in time (μετεχόμενον ἐν + ὄν + ... + ἴσον καὶ ἄνισον +) ἀμέθεκτον χρόνου μετέχον	universal souls
14	(participated one + being + ... + partaking in time +) unparticipated being that partakes in the division of time (μετεχόμενον ἐν + ὄν + ... + χρόνου μετέχον +) ἀμέθεκτον διαιρέσεως τοῦ χρόνου μετέχον	higher beings (angels, daemons, and heroes)

The order of the affirmations stands in strict parallel with the order of the negations of the first hypothesis (*Theol. plat.* II 10, 61.19–62.18), with one notable exception: whereas being is the last predicate to be denied, it is the first to be affirmed. Plato has kept, or so Proclus explains, the most important negation to the end: it denies all things, and summarizes the entire hypothesis. In the second hypothesis, being returns immediately as the highest predicate to be affirmed (Procl., *in Parm.* VII 516.22–517.22). The overall parallelism between the two orders has a specific reason: ‘the negations do not undo what is present in the underlying reality but generate their counterparts’ (Procl., *Theol. plat.* II 10, 63.9–10). Thus, the negations generate the affirmations.

A specific problem for an interpreter like Proclus lies in the fact that the triadic structure of the One-Being (*hen on*) is not present as such in the *Parmenides*.<sup>27</sup> Following the latter account, the combination of One and Being results in a bipartite structure, whereas the triadic structure is derived from the *Philebus*. Yet Proclus sets his hermeneutical skills to reconciling the two. At the end of *Theol. plat.* III (chs 23–8), Proclus argues that in the One-Being, the One has a supra-essential existence (*huperousios huparxis*: Procl., *Theol. plat.* III 24, 84.8), i.e. that it exists in itself before Being. Yet it has a certain relation (*schesis*) to the being with which it is combined at this level. So, the dual scheme in fact presupposes a middle term (*meson*) that lies hidden between the two components. This middle is the One’s *dunamis*, ‘through which and with which the One is productive and perfective vis-a-vis Being’ (Procl., *Theol. plat.* III 24, 84.9–14). In that way, Proclus succeeds in linking together the analysis taken from the *Philebus* with the theological doctrines of the *Parmenides*. The question remains, though, why Plato kept silent about this middle term in the *Parmenides*. According to Proclus, this *mesè dunamis* is certainly not inexistent (*anhuparktos*): the relation between the two terms is a real one. Yet this *dunamis* is hidden: it is not yet really distinct from the One since multiplicity is not yet truly distinguished at the level of the intelligible (Procl., *Theol. plat.* III 24, 84.21 and 28: ἡ δύναμις ἐνταῦθα κρυφίως ἐστίν).

#### 4.5. THE HENADS

With all the analyses in this chapter, we are now prepared to face one of the most difficult and mysterious elements of the Proclean system: the doctrine of the Henads: separate units that are all one (and thus coincide) while at the same time being different, as different gods. This doctrine has time and again been described as a kind of obscurantist attempt to introduce pagan polytheism in a thoroughly monistic system,<sup>28</sup> and for that matter, it has often been dismissed as an unintelligible and inconsistent (because of the introduction of multiple

gods immediately below the One) addition to the speculation.<sup>29</sup> Of course, it is true that the Henads represent the pagan gods. But that should not exempt us from the task of finding a hermeneutic by which the Henads can be integrated as smoothly as possible into Proclus' rational system. Our interpretation will therefore rest on the assumption that a systematic thinker like Proclus would not satisfy himself with the sudden inconsistency of introducing a multiplicity immediately below the One. In fact, we believe that the doctrine of the Henads does not have to constitute a rupture with either the rational endeavours of Proclus nor with the monism or monotheism he installs.

Going back to the second hypothesis of the *Parmenides*, we can review Proclus' interpretation as a survey of fourteen processions of the One-Being, that is, fourteen stages on which a form of unity is combined with a specific (kind of) being. In these combinations, the 'One' obviously takes pride of place: 'the One illumines, fulfils and divinizes Being (καταλάμπων καὶ ἐκπληροῦν καὶ ἐκθεοῦν τὸ ὄν), whereas Being depends on the One and is divinized by it' (Procl., *Theol. plat.* III 24, 85.1–4). The One uses Being as a kind of vehicle and even 'steps on it',<sup>30</sup> thus displaying, as we have already seen, a transcendent existence (*hyperousios hyperaxis*) over against the being with which it is combined. As shown by the scheme, these unities are instances in which the One (that posited itself as unparticipated in the First principle) is present as participated.

These fourteen classes of 'one' (*hen*) that combine with beings are called (classes of) Henads. They are instantiations of the first One, with a precise (and cumulative) addition (*prosthesis* or *pleonasmos*: Procl., *Theol. plat.* III 4, 14.16–15.5) in every single case, which makes them different from the absolute unity of the One.

Proclus' insistence on the Henads' existing beyond being and on their pluralized existence, has led most commentators to believe that the Henads constitute a separate level in reality, below the First and above Being. There, the traditional gods would reside in close connection to the First principle. This view, however, entails at least two inconsistencies: (1) in opposition to his own principles, Proclus would thus posit a large multiplicity immediately below the One where it would, moreover, rival the two principles of Limit and Unlimited; (2) if, as Proclus says, a lower level always displays a larger (actual) multiplicity than a higher one (see e.g. Procl., *El. theol.* § 62, 58.22–3), then the relation between the Henads and Being would be an exception to this rule: the classes of being that participate in the Henads are of the exact same number as the Henads themselves (Procl., *El. theol.* § 135, 120.3–4).

These inconsistencies (which it is hard to believe that Proclus would not have spotted himself) can be solved only by accepting that the Henads do not occupy a separate level in reality, as is shown by H. D. Saffrey and L. G. Westerink in their edition of *Theol. plat.* III. The mode of existence of the Henads (and their relation to the First One) needs to be reconsidered.

They do not occupy a 'horizontal' plain between the First and Being, but they are, rather, coextensive with the different stages of being in the second hypothesis of the *Parmenides*. That is to say: the Henads exist at every single level of the One-Being. The One is always the Henad, present as the top of the combination, and thus there are fourteen classes of Henads. They all have two common characteristics: they have a typicality (*idiotês*), which is expressed by the affirmations of the second hypothesis (Procl., *Theol. plat.* I 10, 43.15–16); at the same time they are all one, and in that sense identical with one another and with the One itself.

At *in Parm.* VI 1047.20–1051.25, Proclus explains this 'unity with the One, without merging together' (*πρὸς τὸ ἐν ἀσύγχυτος ἕνωσις*: 1050.12). He first shows an analogy with the interrelation of the Forms at the level of the World of Ideas: all Ideas participate in each other, which is another level at which one can see the involvement of separate entities in each other. Yet the case of the Henads is different: the Henads do not just participate in each other, but qua *hen*, they are fully identical with one another. They fully coincide since any kind of 'participation' or other qualifications of the relation between the Henads would do away with their unitary existence. Of course, this means that the problem rebounds: if they are identical, then how can the Henads be distinct? Proclus emphasizes the purity of the Henads as displaying one single characteristic that distinguishes them from one another (the characteristics as described in schema 4.2), without affecting their unity. In fact, the difficult conciliation between the Henads' unity and difference is due to our conceptualization, which describes the Henads as seen from below. We ascribe certain qualities to them on the basis of their effects, i.e. the things we find existing in the beings that depend on every single Henad: 'we know their unity and their typicality from secondary things that depend on them' (Procl., *in Parm.* VI 1049.2–3). Thus, our difficult description of the Henads is due to indirect knowledge that teaches us that the Henads, as the top of the series of beings, have the pure characteristic of these beings, while at the same time being the unity that cannot be differentiated. On the other hand, this indirect knowledge is the best we can obtain, as we have no access to the undifferentiated and unknowable realm in which the Henads exist in their own right. In other words, the gods get their names from the effects they produce, even though, in their separate existence, they all coincide and are not affected by their effects (cf. Procl., *El. theol.* § 162, 140.28–142.3).

From this angle, our conceptualization of the Henads reveals them to be principles of order: their typicality is transmitted to the entire class of beings that depends on every single Henad. We then get different series of beings, headed up by the Henad, which in itself remains unparticipated and unknowable but whose characteristic is present at all levels of the series.<sup>31</sup> This bond between the Henad and the beings that depend on it is realized by the Henad's



creative power (Procl., *El. theol.* § 152, 134.6–22), by which it is capable of bringing forth its proper class of beings.

Thus, I believe it is safe to say that the Henads are the unknowable and unparticipated top level of every class of intelligible beings; they are the One that combines itself with Being and through this combination obtains its own typicality. Yet, in their quality of being one, they all coincide and are literally identical.

This may answer the question where to situate the Henads in the system, but it does not yet provide an answer to another, even more difficult, question: how the doctrine of the Henads can be reconciled with the two opposite principles, Limit and Unlimited? At *El. theol.* § 159, Proclus says:

Every class of gods stems from the first principles: Limit and Unlimitedness; some are more dependent on the cause of Limit, and others more on the Unlimited.

(Procl., *El. theol.* § 159, 138.30–2)<sup>32</sup>

On the other hand, in the same work he states the opposite: ‘all that is divine is primordially and eminently simple’ (Procl., *El. theol.* § 127, 112.25). How can the composite nature of the Henads then be reconciled with their absolute simplicity or unity? E. R. Dodds was puzzled by this problem, which had been raised already by Nicholas of Methone in the twelfth century, in his fierce refutation of Proclus’ *Elements of Theology*:

It is somewhat surprising that the henads, which are ἐνικώταται and ἀπλούσταται (Procl. 127), should be infected by this radical duality: πῶς σύνθετοι οἱ θεοί; asks Nicolaus à propos of the present passage, and I confess I do not know the answer.

(Dodds 1963: 281, commenting on *El. theol.* § 159)

How, then, is the doctrine of the Henads to be reconciled with the analysis of the procession of the principles? The question is too fundamental to be left open, and it is hardly conceivable that Proclus—even though we have no direct answer in the extant works—would not have an answer (cf. Van Riel 2001a).

An important clue to finding an answer is that Proclus does sometimes bring those two aspects of his system together. At *Theol. plat.* III 12, he calls the principle of Limit a god who proceeds, at the head of the intelligible world, from the unparticipated god, while Unlimitedness (*apeiria*) is the bottomless power of this unparticipated god (Procl., *Theol. plat.* III 12, 44.23–45.6). And there is also the text from *Theol. plat.* III 8, already quoted, where Proclus asserts that there is a one (*ti hen*) that precedes being, as its productive cause, and possesses the generative power to produce—adding that this one is what Plato calls *peras* (Procl., *Theol. plat.* III 8, 31.14–32.7). This is the terminology of the Henads: a ‘certain one’ (*ti hen*), connected to being, as opposed to the unparticipated absolute One. The *ti* refers to the typicality (*idiotês*) of the Henad, and the relation with being is one of a generative *dunamis*. One may safely say that Limit and the Unlimited are, indeed, applied to the case of the

Henads here, whereby Limit refers to the existence (*huparxis*) of the Henad,<sup>33</sup> and the Unlimited is the generative power proper to every single Henad. In a general statement on the intelligible triads, Proclus says the following:

The first member of every intelligible triad is Limit, Henad, and existence (*πέρας καὶ ἓνα καὶ ὑπαρξίς*), the second is Unlimitedness and power (*ἀπειρία καὶ δύναμις*), and the third is Mixture (*μικτόν*), i.e., Being [*οὐσία*, in the first triad], Life [*ζωή*, in the second] and intelligible Intellect [*νοῦς νοητός*, in the third].  
(Procl., *Theol. plat.* III 14, 51.6–7)<sup>34</sup>

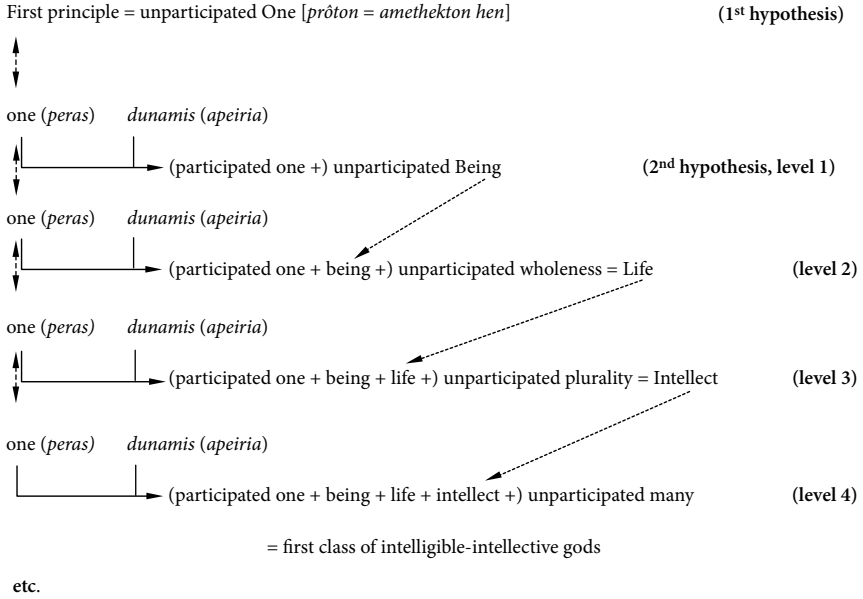
All of this suggests that the first Limit (the principle itself), which we have detected previously as the first ‘real One’, in which being participates, is the first Henad. It constitutes the pinnacle of the first One-Being, characterized as Being itself. Thus, the analysis of the One-Being as a triadic structure (*hen/peras—dunamis/apeiria—on/mikton*) is in fact an analysis of the way in which a Henad functions towards the being that depends on it. It poses itself as the one that ‘rides upon’ being, and produces being by its hidden *apeiria* or generative power. In that sense, the Henad maintains its supra-essential existence (*hyperousios huparxis*) while at the same time heading a series of beings that depend on it through its productive power (*paraktikē dunamis*).

If this is true, then we can broaden the scheme by inferring that the one within every one-being refers to a Henad, which sets itself as the first element of the triad (the limit or *peras*) at each separate level and contains in itself the hidden power to produce its proper class of beings.

In that sense, the Henads are supra-essential without constituting a separate level of all Henads between the One and Being. They are, rather, the self-identical repetition of the one beyond a specific class of beings, characterized by the typicality of every single Henad, which typicality we deduce from the characteristics of the beings that depend on that Henad. In themselves, the Henads are not differentiated: they are nothing but ‘one’, just like the First One, but with this difference: the Henads are participated forms of unity—and it is this participation that differentiates them *ex effectibus*.

On the basis of this analysis, we can now refine the scheme of the fourteen stages of the one-being as in Schema 4.3 on the next page.

In this way, the theology or henadology taken from the second hypothesis of the *Parmenides* can be reconciled with the overall structure of the principles. The exegesis of the second hypothesis (the intelligible realm) is one specific instance of the way in which the First principle, the Limit, and the Unlimited produce being. The operation of these principles is broader than this: it continues at all levels below the Intelligible, down to matter as the sheer receptivity (or passive *dunamis*) that inverts the generative power of the higher realms. Because, however, the account of Limit—Unlimited—Mixture is only a schematism that does not explain what the specific typicality of a certain level of being looks like, we still need the theology of the *Parmenides* and the



Schema 4.3. The triadic stages of the one-being.

physics of the *Timaeus* to explain the difference and sequence of the procession of all beings. In that sense, one can say that the triadic structure, which, as Damascius points out, deviates from the exegesis of the *Parmenides*,<sup>35</sup> is broader than what one finds in both the *Parmenides* and the *Timaeus*,<sup>36</sup> but it only offers the frame or the skeleton of the system. The contents of the doctrine need to be derived from the two dialogues that close the Platonic curriculum: *Timaeus* and, above all, *Parmenides*.

## NOTES

- \* The research for this paper was made possible by a stipend from the Belgian Francqui Foundation.
1. On Proclus' place in the later Neoplatonic tradition, see also Ch. 2 in this volume.
  2. Cf. Procl., in *Tim.* I 378.25–6: τῶν ὄντων ἡ πρόοδος συνεχῆς ἐστι καὶ οὐδὲν ἐν τοῖς οὖσι ἀπολέλειπται κενόν. *Theol. plat.* III 4, 15.24–6; *De mal.* 13.9–10; 14.13 (*processus continuus*).
  3. The 'Letter to Dionysius' is the *Second Letter* attributed to Plato; the passage to which reference is made here is 312e, often used by the Neoplatonists in their description of the first principle. The text from the *Second Letter* runs as follows: 'Upon the king of all do all things turn; he is the end of all things and the cause of all good' (tr. Morrow).

4. All translations are mine, unless stated otherwise.
5. Cf. already Plotinus, who claims that if one wants to attain the highest principle, one should abstract all determination from it: 'Take everything away' (Ἀφ' ἑλε πάντα: Plot., *Enn.* V 3 [49] 17.38).
6. For a general account of the causal scheme of remaining, procession, and reversion see Ch. 3 in this volume.
7. Saffrey, in Saffrey and Westerink (1968–97: ii. 37 n. 5 [n. compl. p. 98]), giving a comment on Procl., *Theol. plat.* II 5: 'De ces trois voies, Proclus ne retient ici que deux, l'analogie et les négations . . . É. Gilson a bien vu que c'est seulement dans une métaphysique de l'être que la voie d'éminence est possible. "Dans une doctrine de l'Être, l'inférieur n'est qu'en vertu de l'être du supérieur. Dans une doctrine de l'Un, c'est au contraire un principe général que l'inférieur n'est qu'en vertu de ce que le supérieur n'est pas; en effet, le supérieur ne donne jamais ce qu'il n'a pas, puisque, pour pouvoir donner cette chose, il faut qu'il soit au-dessus d'elle" (*L'Être et l'essence*, Paris, 1948, p. 42).'
8. Cf. Beierwaltes (1979: 348–57, esp. 352): 'Nichts befaßt ἐπέκεινα, ὑπέρ, ἐξ, πρό und ἀ– in sich.'
9. Procl., in *Parm.* VI 1075.14–15. See also in *Parm.* VI 1075.26–9 and 1076.23–4; *Theol. plat.* II 10, 63.8–17. Cf. Trouillard (1972: 88–9).
10. Procl., *Theol. plat.* III 8, 31.16. This phrase echoes *Theol. plat.* III 7, 30.7–8 (quoted in section 4.1), where Proclus stated that 'we must honour this cause by silence, and by the unity that precedes silence'.
11. Proclus also applies this mode of production to other levels of being: see e.g. Ch. 5 on Intellect.
12. Cf. e.g. Procl., *Theol. plat.* III 8, 32.13–15; in *Parm.* VII 1150.25–31 (where it seems that Iamblichus already used the term in this way—if Dillon 1988: 36–9 is right in attributing this anonymous reference to Iamblichus). The word ἐκφαίνειν can also have the reverse meaning: that of manifesting the principle from the effects; see e.g. Procl., *Theol. plat.* III 8, 32.13–15: Τὸ δὲ πέρας τῶν ὄντων καὶ τὸ ἄπειρον ἐκφαίνει τὴν ἀγνωστον ἐκείνην καὶ ἀμέθεκτον αἰτίαν. Thus, the term fits the description Combès (1987a) uses to explain the function of the three monads (truth, beauty, and proportion) in Proclus' works: Combès distinguishes between 'une fonction ontogénique' and 'une fonction théophanique', by which the three monads are at the same time pointers in the direction of the first principle (théophanique) and structuring principles by which the lower reality is governed (ontogénique). One could say, *mutatis mutandis*, that ἐκφαίνειν in the sense of 'producing' refers to ontogenesis, whereas 'manifesting' refers to theophany.
13. For a more detailed analysis of the different levels of Forms, see Ch. 5 in this volume.
14. For the notion of ὑπαρξίς in Proclus: see Steel (1994b).
15. Cf. Procl., *El. theol.* § 89, 82.4: τὸ γὰρ ἑνὸς μετασχὼν πεπέρασται. *Dec. dub.* X 65.27–32: 'et est secundum unum quidem existentia que uniuscuiusque'.
16. Procl., *Theol. plat.* III 9, 37.25–6. Cf. Beierwaltes (1979: 51–2).
17. The *Chaldaean Oracles* present a triad ὑπαρξίς-δύναμις-νοῦς (Fr. 4 des Places, with n. compl. p. 124). Iamblichus had already elaborated a close parallel between the Chaldaean triad and the Platonic triad of πέρας-ἄπειρον-μικτόν; see also O'Meara (1989: 93).

18. 'There are two sorts of potency' (διττὴ ἡ δύναμις), Proclus says (*in Alc.* 122.9–11): a 'perfect' potency, which is the productive power of the higher, and an 'imperfect' potency, which is the power to become something and is typical of lower reality. The passive potency of the lower thus inverts the productive power of the higher (Procl., *Theol. plat.* III 10, 40.10–41.15; III 8, 34.1–11). This is an Aristotelian distinction (Arist., *Met.* K 1, 1046a4–35) that became very prolific in Neoplatonism. See Steel (1996b); Segonds (1985–6: i. 122 n. 2 [n. compl. p. 195]); Saffrey and Westerink (1968–97: iii. 34 n. 3 [n. compl. p. 122]). Both potencies have two stages: they first exist *κρυφίως*, and then become actual (*κατ' ἐνέργειαν*): see Procl., *Theol. plat.* III 9, 39.11–24; cf. Procl., *El. theol.* § 121, 106.10–12. Moreover, these potencies are complementary: something can only cause or produce if the lower has a receptive power (*ἐπιτηδεδιότης*) to undergo this operation (cf. already Plotinus, *Enn.* VI 4 [22] 15.1–3; Iamblichus, *apud* Simpl., *in Cat.* 302.29–36; Procl., *in Parm.* IV 842.29–843.18).
19. Procl., *Theol. plat.* I 10, 45.3–4; III 9, 36.2–3; III 18, 58.22–3; *in Parm.* I 698.6; I 703.23–4; I 710.8–9 and elsewhere.
20. Procl., *Theol. plat.* III 8, 33.3–34.5; *in Parm.* VI 1119.5–1123.14; *in Tim.* I 176.6–177.2.
21. Procl., *El. theol.* § 27, 30.25–32.9; § 71, 68.9–16; § 121, 106.16–22; § 133, 118.18–19; cf. Gersh (1978: 33–4).
22. See e.g. Procl., *Theol. plat.* III 8, 31.18–23; the relevant passage here is the following: 'If, then, this one is the cause and producer of being, there must be a power in it that is generative of being. For every productive principle produces in accordance with its proper force, which is to be situated in between the producer and the produced, as the former's procession and as it were extension, and the latter's presiding generative cause.' Cf. also Procl., *Theol. plat.* III 8, 33.1–2; *in Tim.* I 176.11–12; *in Parm.* II 738.14–24; VI 1124.1–7.
23. For an elaborate discussion of this principle, see Ch. 3 in this volume.
24. Cf. the Enneadic scheme by which Hadot (1968: 262–3) summarizes Proclus' system.
25. Cf. Plato, *Soph.* 245b: τὸ πεπονθὸς τὸ ἔν. Procl., *Theol. plat.* I 11, 47.7–8; II 10, 63.14–16: ὁ τι γὰρ ἂν προσθῆς, ἐλαττοῖς τὸ ἔν, καὶ οὐχ ἔν αὐτὸ λοιπὸν ἀποφαίνεις, ἀλλὰ πεπονθὸς τὸ ἔν.
26. The scheme is based on Procl., *Theol. plat.* III 6, 25.11–26.11 and *El. theol.* §§ 160–3; cf. also the scheme in Saffrey and Westerink (1968–97: I, pp. lxviii–lxix, and III, p. xlix); and the scheme in Dodds (1963: 282), in his comments on *El. theol.* §§ 162–5. In his extant works (his commentary on the second hypothesis being lost) Proclus nowhere gives a survey of the different affirmations of the second hypothesis. The order can be reconstructed on the basis of the discussion of the negations in the first seven books of *in Parm.* and on the basis of hints at the affirmations of the second hypothesis in *Theol. plat.* III–VI (which does not cover the end of the second hypothesis either). A comprehensive scheme of Proclus' metaphysical system can be found in Appendix I.
27. For a more elaborate account of this attempt to reconcile the *Philebus* with the *Parmenides*, see Van Riel (2000).
28. Zeller (1881: 796); Dodds (1963: 259–60).

29. Thus e.g. (implicitly) Dodds (1963) in his comment on Procl., *El. theol.* § 159, and Siorvanes (1996: 176).
30. Procl., *Theol. plat.* I 3, 15.13–14: ἐποχέιται. *Theol. plat.* III 5, 19.27: ἐπιβατεύει. Proclus also refers to the One as the ‘pinnacle’ (ἄκρον), ‘flower’ (ἄνθος), or ‘point’ (κέντρον) of the combination ἐν ὧν: *Theol. plat.* III 4, 14.13–15; in *Parm.* VI, 1049.23–8; *El. theol.* § 135.
31. Procl., in *Parm.* VII 499.4–14; 517.33–8. One may recall here the image of Plato’s *Phaedrus* (252c–253c) where every deity is followed by a procession of people who share their character.
32. This is not a single case—the thesis is confirmed at Procl., *Theol. plat.* III 26, 92.23–4.
33. Cf. *Theol. plat.* I 3, 15.13–14, where Proclus affirms that ‘the existence of the gods rides on the beings’ (ἡ δὲ τῶν θεῶν ὑπαρξίς ἐποχέιται τοῖς οὐσι).
34. Cf. *Theol. plat.* III 8, 32.15–19; III 12, 45.13–46.22; III 24, 86.7–9; IV 3, 16.10–11; IV 3, 16.23–17.14.
35. Dam., in *Parm.* I 57.2–4 (Ruelle II 37.19–20): ‘Let’s say that this triad is not taken from the *Parmenides* but is a combination of what one finds in the *Philebus* and the *Timaeus*.’
36. Proclus states this explicitly concerning the *Timaeus*: in *Tim.* I 263.10–14.

## Platonic Forms and the Triad of Being, Life, and Intellect

Pieter d'Hoine

### 5.1. INTRODUCTION

The triad of Being, Life, and Intellect is the key to understanding the later Neoplatonic views of the structure and causal role of the intelligible world. Within this triad, one of the very central doctrines of ancient Platonism, the 'theory' of Forms, has received an entirely new meaning and function. Even if the doctrine of the Forms is one of the 'twin pillars' of Platonism, as it was famously labelled by Cornford (1935: 2), the dialogues can hardly be said to provide any systematic account of it. The elaboration of the doctrine was thus left to Plato's successors who took this task to heart from the early Academy onwards. In the later Neoplatonists, the doctrine acquires the shape of a more or less coherent metaphysical theory. Proclus is the philosopher in which these attempts at systematization received their final expression. In his commentaries on the *Timaeus* and the *Parmenides*, as well as in his *magnum opus*, *Platonic Theology*, one can find not only a reasonably systematic outline of this doctrine but also an exegetical and philosophical justification of it.

In this chapter, we will be concerned both with the metaphysical frame in which Platonic Forms are interpreted by Proclus and with the new meaning that the doctrine acquires in this context. I will first discuss the general triadic structure of the intelligible world as conceived of by Proclus in its expression in the three aspects of Being, Life, and Intellect. Next, I will attempt to clarify how Proclus fits the cosmology of the *Timaeus*, which has been central to all later interpretations of Platonic Forms, into this structure. A discussion of Proclus' criticism of Aristotle will further allow us to present Proclus' views on the causal role of Intellect and the Forms. Finally, I will conclude with a discussion of Proclus' exegesis of the extensive discussion of the Forms in the first part of the *Parmenides*, which will allow us to see how the Platonic

theory of Forms as recoverable from the dialogues is reinterpreted by Proclus within the conceptual framework expounded in his systematic works.

## 5.2. THE TRIADIC STRUCTURE OF BEING

One of the fundamental axioms of Greek thought, which we find as early as Parmenides, is that being and thought are intrinsically related.<sup>1</sup> That which is can be an object of thought, or, inversely, only that which is intelligible really exists. Plato's theory of Forms is a development from this axiom, insofar as the Forms, which are genuinely intelligible objects, are associated in the mature dialogues with true being and with that which really is. Parmenides had also maintained that all being is one and immobile, for in order to function as a proper object of thought, being should be stable and steadfast. When Plato calls the Forms unchangeable and 'always being in the same state' (*aei kata tauta hōsautōs echon*), he has clearly drawn more than one lesson from Parmenides.<sup>2</sup> However, in the *Sophist* (248a–249a), Plato develops an extensive criticism of the 'friends of the Forms', rejecting the thesis of the immobility of being. According to the Eleatic Stranger, that which in any way is should have the power (*dunamis*) to act and to be acted upon (247d8–e2), since even to be known is an affection of some kind and surely being is an object of knowledge. It follows that 'perfect being' (*to pantelōs on*) cannot be entirely changeless and immobile but must instead include motion, life, soul, and intellect (*Soph.* 248e7–249a2).

This passage of the *Sophist* played a decisive role in the development of the Neoplatonic views on the internal structure of the intelligible world.<sup>3</sup> From this passage Plotinus concluded that the first hypostasis after the One is essentially characterized by being, life, and intellect.<sup>4</sup> The second Plotinian hypostasis, Intellect, is constituted when the indeterminate power flowing from the One reverts by its intrinsic desire upon its origin in the act of contemplation. Yet, by its incapacity to comprehend it, the Intellect breaks up its unity, thus giving rise to a plurality of Forms that are both (more particular) intellects and intelligible objects (see e.g. *Enn.* V 1 [10] 7; VI 7 [38] 15). Together, the Forms within the Intellect form an organic unity in which each is contained in all the others. In this sense, according to Plotinus, being only acquires its full perfection in its identity with life and intellect. It is only after Plotinus, probably from Iamblichus onwards (pace Hadot 1957; cf. Edwards 1997), that these three main constituents of being took the form of an established triad. For the later Neoplatonists, Being, Life, and Intellect are the three successive moments in the articulation of being in general. For Proclus, they constitute three different levels of reality between the One and the Soul, often referred to as the intelligible (*noêton*), the intelligible and intellectual



(*noëton kai noeron*), and the intellective (*noeron*) levels of reality. Proclus develops this triad from Platonic tradition, but the exegetical backup for it derives from a close reading of the *Sophist* passage (e.g. *Theol. Plat.* III 6, 26.12–23; in *Tim.* I 417.13–21). For Proclus, the triad of Being, Life, and Intellect represents a general theory of being, and he sometimes fits the five 'greatest kinds' of the *Sophist*, which the Eleatic stranger employed in his analysis of being, into this scheme. Along these lines, Being is the first member, whereas motion and rest are associated with Life, and identity, and difference with Intellect.<sup>5</sup> Being 'proceeds' through the motion and rest associated with Life to Intellect. In Intellect all the Forms are contained in identity and difference with one another, as they are distinguished according to their essence yet remain identical as each Form contains all the other Forms (e.g. *El. theol.* § 176; cf. in *Parm.* II 755.6–9; 756.26–757.2).

The hierarchy of these three levels can be determined on the basis of the metaphysical principle that, since causes are more powerful than their consequences, higher causes have more numerous effects and continue to manifest themselves where subordinate causes have already been exhausted (cf. *El. theol.* § 57, § 60). Hence, in the *Elements of Theology*, Proclus establishes the following hierarchy:

[S]ince the cause of more numerous effects precedes the cause of fewer, among these principles Being will stand foremost; for it is present to all things which have life and intellect (since whatever lives and shares in intellection necessarily exists), but the converse is not true (since not all that exists lives and exercises intelligence). Life has the second place; for whatever shares in intellect shares in life, but not conversely, since many things are alive but remain devoid of knowledge. The third principle is Intellect; for whatever is in any measure capable of knowledge both lives and exists. (*El. theol.* § 101, 90.22–9; tr. Dodds, slightly mod.)<sup>6</sup>

For Proclus, the triad of Being, Life, and Intellect not only accounts for the self-constitution of being, which through the power of Life proceeds in order to revert upon its origin in the perfecting act of contemplation which constitutes Intellect. In addition, it also provides an analysis of the triadic structure of the self-constitution of particular beings (cf. Hadot 1957: 107; cf. e.g. Dam., *De princ.* III 45.17–46.8). This triad in fact parallels the fundamental derivation principle of Neoplatonic metaphysics, according to which each effect remains in its cause, proceeds from it, and reverts upon it.<sup>7</sup> The triadic process of remaining, procession, and reversion renders the idea that each effect is already contained within its cause, from which it proceeds by virtue of abundance of power and from the reversion to which it obtains its perfection and determination.<sup>8</sup> This is one of the fundamental derivationist rules of Neoplatonic metaphysics, which warrants the continuity between the different layers of reality proceeding from the One. Proclus is certainly not the first to employ it, but nowhere before him do we find it expressed and formalized so

emphatically.<sup>9</sup> Apart from explaining the relations between causes and effects, this triadic structure can also serve to analyse the internal structure of each hypostasis. In fact, the main division of the intelligible realm into Being, Life, and Intellect can be further articulated in terms of their constituent triads, so that each element is mirrored in each of the three hypostases.<sup>10</sup> This analysis leads to a formulation in nine entities, each of which is defined in terms of the predominant element:

All things are in all things, but in each according to its proper nature. For in Being there is life and intellect; in Life, being and intellect, in Intellect, being and life. But each of these exists upon one level intellectually, upon another vitally, and on the third existentially. (*El. theol.* § 103, 92.13–16; tr. Dodds, slightly mod.)

The idea that all principles are implicit in one another was probably formulated for the first time by the Middle Platonist Numenius (Fr. 41 des Places), even though the notion of defining terms by predominance goes all the way back to Anaxagoras (Fr. 59B8 D–K). Along these lines, Being, Life, and Intellect are all constituted out of triads that mirror their overall structure, even though in the first triad being is the predominant element, in the second life, and in the third intellect. Being, for instance, which comes about as the first product of the Limited and the Unlimited, is the unitary cause of all beings and can therefore be referred to as the ‘One Being’.<sup>11</sup> When this One Being proceeds from itself as a result of its abundance of perfection, it gives rise to the dynamic force of life, which upon reversion to its source constitutes itself as the intellectual element of Being (*Theol. plat.* III 9, 35.19–24; in *Tim.* III 100.1–8). This first Intellect or Intelligible Intellect is the *locus* of the primordial Forms, the very first intelligible objects. The triadic structure of the lower hypostases of Life and Intellect can be understood analogously, with the important difference that they will be dominated by life and intellect respectively. This abstract structure will hopefully become clearer in the next sections. I will only add here that the nine resulting members of the three developed triads can again be further analysed in terms of their constituent triads so as to allow for an analysis of the procession of being in which no gaps are left and no properties unaccounted for.<sup>12</sup>

### 5.3. THE PARADIGM AND THE DEMIURGE

A second source for Proclus’ views on the intelligible world that we must discuss is Plato’s *Timaeus*, which has played a decisive role in the development of all later interpretations of the Platonic theory of Forms from Middle Platonism onwards. The cosmology of the *Timaeus* expounds how a divine Demiurge engenders the sensible world by shaping a pre-existent and

disorderly moving receptacle in resemblance to a most beautiful Paradigm that contains the eternal models of all living beings. Both ancient and modern interpreters of the dialogue have taken great pains to understand the exact relations that Plato envisages between the various actors that are on stage in this semi-mythical account—to wit, the Demiurge and the Paradigm or intelligible Living Being—since the text allows for a number of quite different interpretations. The ambiguity consists, as Proclus acknowledges (*in Tim.* I 323.22–324.14), in that, on the one hand, the Demiurge is said to contemplate the Forms present in the Living Being (*Tim.* 39e7–9), thereby suggesting that the Demiurge and the Paradigm at which he looks are distinct from each other; on the other hand, Plato also maintains that the Demiurge wished that ‘all things would become as much like him as possible’ (*Tim.* 29e2–3), which may be taken to imply that he himself is the paradigm upon which the creation is modelled. As a result of their interpretation of the *Timaeus*, most of the philosophers we are accustomed to call ‘Middle Platonists’ considered the Forms to be the thoughts of a divine Intellect, thus favouring the identification between the Demiurge and the intelligible model.<sup>13</sup> Yet, in his *Commentary on the Timaeus* and elsewhere, Proclus informs us that some other Platonists dissociated the two. Of these, both Atticus and Longinus gave the Demiurge priority over the intelligible paradigm, whereas Porphyry made him subordinate to it, according to the doxographical information provided by Proclus (*in Tim.* I 322.18–26; 431.14–28; *Theol. plat.* V 14, 46.18–47.13; V 27, 99.19–23). Plotinus’ position is somewhat more complex. In the *Enneads* much emphasis is put on the identity of Intellect with its objects, which is illustrated by Plotinus’ notorious contention that the intelligibles are not outside the intellect.<sup>14</sup> For Plotinus, being and thought form an intrinsic unity. The Forms should not be understood as the external objects of an Intellect contemplating them but are instead both the subjects and the objects of the Intellect’s thinking: the unity of Intellect with its object forms an integral part of his account of the self-constitution of the second Plotinian hypostasis. For this reason, in his doxographical account Proclus includes the author of the *Enneads* among those who identify the Demiurge with the Paradigm.<sup>15</sup>

Following the lead of his master Syrianus, Proclus finds a way to reconcile Plotinus’ position with those who insist on the distinction between the Demiurge and the Paradigm, thus doing justice to the ambiguity of Plato’s own account in the *Timaeus*. Since the Paradigm represents ‘that which always is’ (*to on aei Tim.* 27d6) and is called an ‘intelligible Living Being’ (*noêton zôion; Tim.* 39e1), there can be no doubt that it belongs to the realm of Being, or to the intelligible in a strict sense. Still, it cannot have the highest rank among the intelligibles, for Plato says that the Living Being comprehends the four species of animals and plants living on earth, in water, in the air, and in the heavens (*Tim.* 39e7–40a2). This is the reason why the later Neoplatonists connect the Living Being with the Pythagorean ‘*tetras*’ (see e.g. *Theol. plat.* III 19,

65.20–67.19; in *Tim.* III 105.14–112.19). Since in the Paradigm being is already differentiated into a certain amount of multiplicity, it must derive from a higher cause in which all being is comprehended indiscriminately, for each multiplicity partakes in unity (*El. theol.* § 1). First in the rank of Being we must therefore put the unitary cause of all being, which Proclus calls the One Being or the monad of being. The Paradigm cannot come immediately after the One Being either. Since it is an eternal Living Being, it possesses Life by participation and must therefore be preceded by Life itself. Hence, the Paradigm is to be connected with the third member of the intelligible triad, i.e. with the intelligible Intellect.<sup>16</sup> Proclus' intelligible Intellect most characteristically preserves the Plotinian identification between Intellect and its object. Within this first Intellect, which is itself its proper object of thought, the unity of Being fragmentizes into multiplicity as a result of its being thought. This first multiplicity of the four primordial Forms, which represent the four species of living beings, will serve as an eternal and intelligible Paradigm for all creation (see e.g. *Theol. plat.* III 14, 51.20–52.11).

The Demiurge, for his part, is called an Intellect by Plato (*nous: Tim.* 39e7), and this is sufficient reason for Proclus to establish that he belongs to the 'intellective' realm. Proclus associates the demiurgic Intellect with the first triad of Intellect and, more specifically, with its lowest, intellective aspect; he thus calls it an intellective Intellect.<sup>17</sup> Demiurge and Paradigm are clearly distinguished from one another, as belonging to Intellect and Being respectively. Yet Proclus would not be the subtle philosopher he is if he did not also find a way to tighten the bonds between the two main causes of Plato's cosmology in an attempt to rescue the Plotinian identity between Intellect and its intelligible objects at the lower levels of the intelligible realm. According to Proclus, the Paradigm is not merely prior to the Demiurge, it is also to be found in a certain sense within the Demiurge (*in Tim.* I 323.16–22; 431.28–30; 361.19–21). If there can be no thought that is not a thought of something, as Plato holds in the *Parmenides* (132bc), then the object of thought must indeed have priority over thinking,<sup>18</sup> and hence Being precedes Intellect. Nonetheless, it is also true that genuine knowledge is attained only when the thinking agent and the object thought become identified with each other, as both Aristotle and Plotinus had maintained.<sup>19</sup> According to Proclus, thinking is not directed towards anything external but consists in the reversion of the thinking agent upon itself. This also holds for the demiurgic Intellect. In thinking itself, the Demiurge simultaneously knows both itself and its priors in the sense that it knows itself as derived from a higher source.<sup>20</sup> In this paradoxical sense, the Intellect knows the Forms contained in the Paradigm when it is turned towards itself.<sup>21</sup>

The self upon which the demiurgic Intellect reverts is a procession from a higher cause, reverting upon which the Intellect constitutes itself as a determined and distinct reality. Thus, when the demiurgic Intellect directs its gaze

to the Paradigm to contemplate the primordial Forms, by the very act of its thinking it constitutes itself as an Intellect and appropriates the Forms which become its own internal objects of thought (cf. *in Parm.* III 789.24–790.4). According to Proclus, the Paradigm and the primordial Forms comprehended by it are at the same time prior to the Demiurge and in the Demiurge, though in different ways. In the previous section we have come across the crucial Neoplatonic principle that all things are in all things but always in a proper way. The Intellect, by contemplating the Forms, appropriates them to its own rank. Proclus expresses this idea by saying that the Forms that are present in an intelligible manner (*noêtôs*) in the Paradigm are comprehended in an intellective way (*noerôs*) by the Demiurge.<sup>22</sup>

Now, since Intellect is a principle of distinction (cf. e.g. *Theol. plat.* V 12, 41.7–9), the four primordial forms of the Paradigm are further differentiated within the Intellect, which by its contemplation of the Living Being brings about the entire manifold of Forms in a discriminate way (*Theol. plat.* V 17, 62.4–63.19). Whereas the One Being was called a monad and the Paradigm a tetrad of living beings, the Intellect is usually associated with the decad, the number ten which in Pythagorean speculation was thought to be comprehended within the tetrad, as it is the sum of the first four numbers ( $1 + 2 + 3 + 4 = 10$ ).<sup>23</sup> This ingenious system in which different layers of reality are distinguished allows Proclus to articulate the increasing multiplication of reality: while the monad of Being comprehends all beings hiddenly and undistinguished, the power of Life brings about a first differentiation of being which leads to the distinction of the four primordial Forms in the Paradigm. These four Forms are further unfolded within the Demiurge, who comprehends all the Forms in a discriminate manner.<sup>24</sup> This differentiated state of the Forms in Intellect is employed by the Demiurge as the model in resemblance of which he imposes order upon the receptacle. This account not only explains the increasing multiplicity to which being is subject in the course of its procession, it also provides a solution to the exegetical problem of the *Timaeus* from which this section set out. In Proclus' view, there is no contradiction between holding that the Demiurge looks at the Paradigm prior to him as a model for his creation, and making the cosmos a resemblance of the Demiurge. For in contemplating the Paradigm, the Demiurge appropriates it to its own rank, and it is to this paradigm within the demiurgic Intellect, where all Forms are essentially distinguished, that the Demiurge assimilates his creation.<sup>25</sup>

#### 5.4. THE CAUSALITY OF INTELLECT

In the Platonic schools of the imperial age, the compatibility of Aristotle's Intellect with Plato's views on the intelligible world must have been the subject

of controversial discussion. In a vexed passage from book *A* of the *Metaphysics* (§ 7), Aristotle had called his highest cause an Intellect thinking itself. This Intellect serves as a final cause of all motion since, as a perfect realization of the highest act, it attracts all beings as an object of desire (*hôs erômenon*; *Met. A* 7, 1072b3). The Middle Platonist Atticus, for one, considered this doctrine to be incompatible with Plato's account of the Demiurge since the Aristotelian view leaves no room for any providential care or creative activity on the part of God (see e.g. Fr. 4 des Places)—two essential functions of the Platonic Demiurge. Others, like Alcinous, had been more susceptible to a possible reconciliation between the two doctrines, even though this could only be brought about at the expense of Aristotle's rejection of the Platonic theory of Forms. In extending the self-knowledge of the Intellect so as to make it include knowledge of the Forms, Alcinous managed to incorporate a few central tenets of Aristotle's Intellect, as is illustrated by his description of the Demiurge in Aristotelian terms (e.g. *Didasc.* X 164.27–31).<sup>26</sup> Proclus puts himself in this latter tradition, as his description of the Demiurge as an immobile cause, an Intellect thinking itself, and object of desire to all beings testifies. Yet these convergences do not prevent Proclus from fiercely criticizing Aristotle as well. First, according to Proclus, Aristotle wrongly qualifies his Intellect as a final cause only. If it is correct to suppose that the Intellect serves as an object of desire for all lower beings that strive towards their own perfection, this striving would be in vain if they could not expect to receive anything in return from the object of their desire. According to the Neoplatonic doctrine of procession and reversion, a being can receive its perfection only by reverting upon the cause from which it proceeds. From this one can infer that Intellect, if it is to be a final cause, must also be an efficient cause of the universe.<sup>27</sup> Yet Intellect cannot be the cause of all beings without knowing their eternal paradigms. Hence, once again, the self-directed thinking of Intellect is also a contemplation of the Forms. In fact, if it belongs to the Intellect's essence to be a cause of all things, then it would be absurd, says Proclus (*in Parm.* III 790.21–791.10; 799.9–16; IV 964.16–25), to suppose that the Intellect can have adequate knowledge of itself without also knowing itself to be a cause. This awareness implies that the demiurgic Intellect has at least causal knowledge of all that it produces. That is, the Intellect cannot but know what it engenders, even if only in a way appropriate to its own essence: hence, it knows all things eternally, unchangeably, and indivisibly. This is to say that the Intellect encompasses the causes of all living beings, i.e. the Forms.

A second departure from Aristotle concerns the place of Intellect in the hierarchy of the causes. According to Proclus (*in Tim.* I 295.19–22; *in Parm.* IV 972.24–973.12), Aristotle is correct in supposing that the Intellect operates as a final cause, yet he mistakenly elevates it to the rank of the first principle. For Proclus, Intellect exerts its role as a final cause merely in a derivative way. That Intellect cannot be the first cause is clear from the fact that it is marked by

multiplicity. This clearly holds true insofar as the Intellect is a plenitude of Forms. Yet, already at a much more fundamental level, every intellect identifies, as we have seen, with its object and therefore implies a duality of subject and object of thought. Since every multiplicity partakes in unity, Intellect must be subordinate to a higher principle, the One, which transcends all plurality (e.g. *El. theol.* § 20, 22.24–5). This line of thought had already been taken up by Plotinus in his criticism of Aristotle.<sup>28</sup> Proclus, however, also adds a further argument that is more distinctive of his own metaphysical principles. We have seen that, according to Proclean principles, higher causes keep producing effects where lower causes have already been exhausted, which implies that causes with a wider range of application must have a higher ontological rank. Obviously, since everything that partakes in knowledge is a unity in some way but not vice versa, unity is a property that extends further down on the scale of being. As a result, unity must be the more universal, and hence the higher cause, which confirms that the One is beyond Intellect (*El. theol.* § 20, 22.25–9). In sum, Aristotle is right to put a single cause at the head of all reality, yet he mistakenly identifies this ultimate, final cause with Intellect because Intellect is still subordinate to the One-Good.

Proclus does follow Aristotle, however, in his characterization of Intellect as an immobile cause—and he extends this immobility even to the Forms contemplated by the Intellect.<sup>29</sup> One could object that this makes Proclus end up with a rather problematic theory since Intellect, which is now said to be an immobile cause, was previously thought, on the basis of the *Sophist*, to be essentially characterized by motion. Proclus thus has recourse to the paradoxical notion of Intellect as an immobile motion (*kinêsis akinêtos*).<sup>30</sup> Furthermore, how can an immobile cause be at the same time efficient, i.e. productive of those lower realities that depend upon it for their being? One of the considerations that prevented Aristotle (*Met.* 1 7, 1072b4–8) from attributing any efficient role to Intellect must precisely have been that this would compromise the immobility of the first cause, in that it would make the activity of the Intellect depend on external, changeable things. Much in the same vein as Plotinus, however, Proclus adopts a particular view of causation that allows him to retain the immobility of Intellect while at the same time accounting for its status as an efficient cause. According to Proclus, the production of lower reality by no means results from any intentional intervention on the part of the Intellect but is an effect of the Intellect's own abundance of perfection. The Intellect creates merely by being the perfect being that it is—or, in later Neoplatonic jargon: it creates by its very being (*autôi tòi einai*).<sup>31</sup> Hence, the Intellect's production does not in any way diminish its infinite power, nor does it make Intellect depend on the effects that it generates. Proclus maintains that the Intellect does not contemplate the Forms in order to produce but rather the opposite: the creative force of Intellect results from the perfect contemplation of the Forms in which the Intellect is eternally involved as it is implied

in its self-knowledge.<sup>32</sup> A notorious principle of Neoplatonic metaphysics holds that causes which operate by their very being produce effects that resemble them, even if these effects are subject to a decline in perfection (*El. theol.* § 18; cf. also § 28; in *Parm.* IV 908.19–31). Since Intellect is a plenitude of Forms, its images will be lower manifestations of these Forms (see e.g. in *Parm.* III 787.21–788.8). This is an application of Plotinus' theory of double activity. Proclus employs it to explain the causal role of the demiurgic Intellect in the following passage:

[T]he act of Intellect has a double nature, the first is intellective, unified with the real beings and indivisible; it exists together with the intelligible aspect of the Intellect itself, or rather: it is both the intelligible itself and the Intellect. In fact, the Intellect does not contemplate the intelligible by being first by itself in potency, and then acquiring the act, but it is a single and simple act. For even its multiplicity is unitary and its act is directed towards itself. The other <act> is directed towards the external and to things that have the capacity to participate in Intellect. In fact, the Intellect makes them also intellective, shining as it were the light of its own intellection and passing it on to the other things.

(*Theol. plat.* V 18, 64.25–65.7)<sup>33</sup>

Plotinus had already employed this doctrine of double activity not only to explain the emanation of lower hypostases from the One but also to understand the constitution of sensible particulars from the Forms.<sup>34</sup> That the Intellect by the perfection of its own being engenders sensible particulars as images of itself may, once again, be taken to be a Neoplatonic reading of the *Timaeus*, where it is said that the Demiurge, being good and therefore lacking envy, wishes the entire creation to resemble him as closely as possible (*Tim.* 29e1–3; cf. Dodds 1963: 213). The production of images of the Forms on lower levels is to be understood in terms of procession of the lower from the higher. When these images are participated in at inferior levels they bestow determination and hence perfection on their participants. The procession of and participation in Forms may be viewed as two sides of the same process, which illustrates once again the cyclic structure of the derivation of the lower from the higher in Neoplatonism (cf. De Rijk 1992: 9). It remains to see now precisely how the causal mechanisms of Proclus' metaphysics apply to the procession of the Forms, which are differentiated for the first time in the demiurgic Intellect, to their lowest manifestations in the sensible world.

## 5.5. PARTICIPATION AND THE FORMS

The theory of participation is the Gordian knot of Platonism, as it attempts to explain how the intelligible (or immaterial) can be present in the sensible



(or material). If the Form is an eternal, immobile, and indivisible cause, then how can it be simultaneously present to a number of individual entities that are spatially separated from one another, corporeally extended, and have an existence limited in time? Both Parmenides in the eponymous Platonic dialogue and Aristotle in the *Metaphysics* have raised similar objections against the Platonic theory of participation.<sup>35</sup> To sort out these paradoxes, the Middle Platonists had already had recourse to a combination of transcendent Forms and immanent form principles. The distinction that Alcinous makes in his *Handbook of Platonism* between 'primary' and 'secondary' intelligibles merges Platonic Forms with Aristotelian formal causes which are their immanent counterparts.<sup>36</sup> Later Platonists were convinced that Plato had employed this distinction in passages such as *Parmenides* 130b3–5, where Parmenides talks about the likeness in us as opposed to the Form of Likeness, and in *Timaeus* 51e6–52b5, where a likeness of the Form is said to come to exist in the receptacle.<sup>37</sup>

The doctrine of double activity provides the Neoplatonists with the conceptual tools to understand the relation between Forms and the formal constituents of bodies. It is a means to save the Form's transcendence while at the same time accounting for the fact that it gives rise to a number of participants on a lower level. While remaining in itself and undiminished, the Form is present to sensible particulars through its images, which impose a likeness of the Form upon the participants. It is probably to Iamblichus that Proclus owes the formalization of this doctrine in terms of the triad of the unparticipated (*amethekton*), the participated (*metechomenon*), and the participant (*metechôn*).<sup>38</sup> According to this theory, one must not only distinguish between the subject of participation (the participant) and the property it receives in virtue of its participation (the participated form) but also between the participated property and its eternal, transcendent warrant, the unparticipated Form. In the relation between sensible particulars and Forms, Proclus (*in Parm.* III 798.8–11) calls matter the participant and the participated term the 'enmattered form' (*enhulon eidos*; on this notion, cf. Helmig 2006). Proclus thus accepts a kind of hylomorphism for the physical world, even though he maintains that the enmattered form is, in the final analysis, merely an image of its intelligible model. If participation were not mediated by formal principles then one could not understand how the Form could preserve its untainted unity. If, however, the formal principles of bodies did not depend upon a higher, transcendent cause, then their common and unchangeable character would be left unexplained. This is what Proclus affirms in his *Commentary on the Parmenides*:

[S]ee how Man, for example, is double: one transcendent and one participated . . . For the things that exist in other, i.e. the common terms and the terms that are participated, must have prior to them that which belongs to itself—in a word, the unparticipated. On the other hand, the transcendent Form which exists in itself,

because it is the cause of many things, unites and binds together the plurality; and again the common character in the many is a bond of union among them. This is why Man himself is one thing, another is the man in the particulars; the former is eternal, but the latter in part mortal and in part not.

(in *Parm.* I 707.8–18; tr. Morrow and Dillon)<sup>39</sup>

So far, we have taken into account only the two extreme ends of the chain of participation, namely, intelligible Forms and sensible particulars. However, the procession of the forms into sensible bodies is mediated by a number of subsequent stages. Plotinus (*Enn.* II 3 [52] 17; III 5 [50] 9.30–7; etc.) had already related the creative force of the Forms to reason-principles or *logoi* in the soul, which proceed from the Forms in Intellect so as to function as the formative and organizing principles of bodies. This doctrine, which is a Neoplatonic adaptation of the Stoic theory of seminal reason-principles (*logoi spermatikoi*), was further developed and formalized by the later Neoplatonists. According to Proclus, each of the hypostases starting from the intelligible Intellect is a plenitude of Forms (*plêrôma eidôn*), in which the entire amount of the forms is present in an appropriate way.<sup>40</sup> In the course of their descent the forms are subject to further division and multiplication. The procession of the forms below Intellect does not produce new essences but continues the progressive differentiation of reality in another way, namely by translating the indivisible unity of each Form into forms participated by a number of temporally successive, corporeally extended particulars until the productive power of the Forms finally becomes exhausted in the material world. Both the relations between the different hypostases and those between their co-ordinate forms can be understood in terms of participation (see e.g. *El. theol.* §§ 99–101 and §§ 108–10). Proclus applies the doctrine of the procession of the Forms to the main levels of Intellect, Soul, nature, and bodies in an interesting passage from his *Commentary on the Parmenides*:

[T]he unmoving causes of [the] Forms are in Intellect primarily, secondarily in souls, thirdly in nature and last of all in bodies. All things exist either visibly or invisibly; and if invisibly, either inseparable from bodies or separately; and if separate, either unmoving in both being and activity, or unmoving in their being, but mobile in activity. The genuinely unmoving beings, consequently, are those that are unchangeable both in their being and in their activity. Such are the Intellects. Second come those that are unmoving in being but mobile in activity, such as souls; third are those that are invisible, but inseparable from visible things, like the natural forms; and last are the visible forms that exist distributively in sensible objects. Thus far extends the procession of the Forms, and with them their descent comes to an end.

(in *Parm.* III 795.25–796.9; tr. Morrow and Dillon, mod.)

The function of the soul is that of a mediator between the intelligible and the sensible which governs the realm of generation and guides, by means of its reason-principles, the production of natural beings.<sup>41</sup> Hence, the soul receives

the Forms from the immobile Intellect and translates them to the realm of motion. In this sense, one could say that the psychic forms have a stable being but that their activity involves motion. These psychic forms are subsequently passed on to nature, which is an irrational agent that operates as an internal principle of natural beings. Since it inspires natural beings from within, nature is inseparable from its products. Finally, the natural reason-principles are the immediate causes of the ultimate processions of the Forms, the enmattered forms. Since they function as the formal principles of bodies and take on the properties of their participants, these enmattered forms can be referred to as visible.<sup>42</sup>

The principle guiding this procession of the Forms is, once again, that 'all things are in all things, but in each according to its proper nature'. As we have seen, in the divine Intellect, all the Forms are distinguished according to their particular property (*idiōma*) for the first time. In the course of its further procession, each Form functions as a monad of a series of participants at various lower levels. Each member of the series partakes in the peculiar characteristic of the Form yet only insofar as is possible in accordance with its own rank, for the receptivity of the participants contributes to the different appearances of the Forms at lower levels. We can in fact distinguish between two types of properties in the nature of each Form. First, as we have seen, each Form has a particular property that essentially distinguishes it from all the other Forms with which it is united in Intellect. One could say that this is the characteristic that the Form is the Form *of* and it is shared by all its participants. Second, insofar as the Forms belong to a specific level of reality, i.e. Intellect, they are endowed with a number of powers (*dunameis*) or ontological properties that all Forms have in common. These properties or powers belong to the Form qua Form, which is why they are not necessarily transmitted to all their participants.<sup>43</sup> All the participants in the Form of Man will share in the property of being human, yet not all of them will for that reason be indivisible, eternal, and changeless like the unparticipated Form. The further a participant is removed from the monad of its series, the less powers it will retain from it. The properties that Proclus in the quoted text relates to the various levels of form are the powers that determine the different appearances of the form in its participated instances.

If the Intellect produces lower beings by bringing about images of the Forms that it contains then we must conclude that Forms function first and foremost as paradigmatic causes in whose resemblance the sensible world is shaped. This talk about Forms as paradigmatic causes is obviously inspired by Plato himself, who calls the *Timaeus*' Living Being a Paradigm but also speaks about Forms that may exist 'as paradigms in nature' in the *Parmenides* (132d3). This terminology must have inspired Xenocrates, the third head of the Old Academy after Plato and Speusippus, to define a Form as a 'paradigmatic cause of whatever is composed continually in accordance with nature' (*αἰτίαν*

παραδειγματικὴν τῶν ἀεὶ κατὰ φύσιν συνεστώτων; in *Parm.* IV 888.13–15 = Xen., Fr. 30 Heinze = 94 Isnardi Parente). The formula became very popular among the Platonists of the imperial age.<sup>44</sup> In the Middle Platonic schools it became common to extend Aristotle's theory of the four causes (the material, the formal, the efficient, and the final) by what they regarded as the typically Platonic cause, namely, the paradigm.<sup>45</sup> This extended list of five causes is sometimes complemented by a sixth, the instrumental, which is supposed to transmit the efficiency of the higher causes to the lower realms (e.g. in *Tim.* I 263.19–21; 357.12–16; cf. also Herm., in *Phdr.* 106.19–23 Couvreur = 112.3–7 Lucarini–Moreschini). Proclus employs this scheme at various occasions throughout his *Commentary on the Timaeus*, where it provides him with new ammunition against Aristotle. According to Proclus, Aristotle puts too much emphasis on the immanent causes of matter and form, whereas his understanding of the efficient and final causes is entirely inadequate.<sup>46</sup> A central tenet of the Neoplatonic causal system requires that true causes be immaterial and transcend their effects (*El. theol.* § 75). Therefore, the formal principles of bodies and their material substrates cannot claim the status of genuine causes. Resorting to the terminology introduced in the *Timaeus* (46c7–e1), Proclus disqualifies the formal and the material cause, together with the instrumental cause, as mere 'subsidiary causes' (*sunaitiai*).<sup>47</sup> This raises only the final, paradigmatic, and efficient causes, if properly understood, to the level of real causes. From our discussion in this section it must be clear that Intellect and the Forms are involved in the operation of these three types of causation, and Proclus warns that if one denies the existence of the Forms, one does away with all three types of genuine causes at once.<sup>48</sup> Yet the Forms, and more particularly the primordial Forms in the intelligible Paradigm, are final causes by participation only (*kata methexin*), and they comprehend the efficient cause merely preliminarily (*kat' aitian*), for the final cause in the strict sense is beyond the Forms and the properly efficient cause is below the Paradigm:

Among types of cause proper, [one should not situate the Forms] among the final or the creative, for even if we say that it creates by reason of its very essence, and that becoming like to it is an end for all generated things, nevertheless the final cause of all things in the strict sense and that for the sake of which all things are is superior to the Forms, and the creative cause in the strict sense is inferior to them, looking to the Paradigm as a criterion and rule of procedure. The Form, then, is median between both these, striving towards the one, and being striven towards by the other. (in *Parm.* IV 888.17–24; tr. Morrow and Dillon, slightly mod.)

The final cause proper is the One beyond Being while the Demiurge is the first truly efficient agent. The formal constituents of bodies are merely images of paradigmatic causes, namely, the Forms, as they are their ultimate processions. Finally, what Aristotle usually regards as the efficient causes of natural

generation, nature, or the particular living being, are instruments that transmit the truly productive causality of Intellect unto the corporeal realm.

## 5.6. THE DISCUSSION OF THE FORMS IN THE FIRST PART OF THE *PARMENIDES*

The doctrines expounded in the previous sections provide, as stated at the outset of this chapter, the frame in which the Platonic 'theory' of Forms as we find it in the mature and late dialogues has been reinterpreted by the Athenian Neoplatonists. The most comprehensive discussion of Forms in Plato is to be found in the *Parmenides*, the first part of which largely consists of a cross-examination of a young Socrates by the old and revered Parmenides on the subject of the Forms. There is no need to insist here on the importance of this dialogue for the history of later Platonism; it will suffice to recall that, at least from Plotinus onwards, Platonist philosophers have read the puzzling discussion about the hypotheses in the *Parmenides*' second part as a cryptic treatise on metaphysics in which Plato provides a systematic outline of the entire metaphysical hierarchy, culminating in a negative theology of the first principle beyond being.<sup>49</sup> Thanks to this metaphysical reading of its second part, the dialogue was considered the capstone of Plato's philosophy. In the Neoplatonic curriculum of studies it was the last dialogue to be read in class, as is clear from the—Iamblichean—order of the dialogues transmitted in the anonymous *Prolegomena to Platonic Philosophy* (26.13–44).<sup>50</sup> This place of the dialogue at the culmination of the philosophical curriculum made the exegesis of the first part of the dialogue a suitable occasion for a systematic discussion and recapitulation of the doctrine of the Forms by the Neoplatonic commentators. Proclus' *Commentary on the Parmenides* is our most precious source for understanding Platonic Forms in post-Plotinian Platonism. However, much of what Proclus has to say relies on previous commentaries or lectures on the *Parmenides* by a number of his predecessors, including at least Iamblichus, Plutarch of Athens, and Syrianus. The very fragmentary transmission of their works, as well as Proclus' reluctance to quote his sources in this commentary, often make it impossible to determine his precise debt to his predecessors.

At the outset of the third book of his *Commentary on the Parmenides* (784.12–20), Proclus introduces four problems about the Forms that will structure his discussion in the two following books: (1) whether Forms exist; (2) of what things there are Forms; (3) how one is to understand the participation of sensible particulars in the Forms; and (4) how one must conceive of the nature of the Forms. Parallels in Syrianus confirm that what Proclus

transmits here is a traditional set of problems borrowed from earlier Platonists and probably developed in the context of a *Commentary on the Parmenides*.<sup>51</sup> Only the first of these problems is not explicitly tackled in the dialogue where Socrates and Parmenides are content to simply affirm their acceptance of the doctrine, probably—says Proclus—‘because Plato wanted to leave it to us’ to formally demonstrate the Forms’ existence (*in Parm.* III 784.18–20). Proclus is not the man to turn down such an invitation. In the third book of his commentary he inserts a long digression on the existence of the Forms for which he draws not only from famous arguments in dialogues such as the *Timaeus* and the *Phaedo* and from the Platonic tradition but also finds support in the theological traditions of the Orphics and the *Chaldaean Oracles* (*in Parm.* III 785.4–804.26). In the six philosophical proofs, Aristotle is once again Proclus’ main target.<sup>52</sup> Starting from the Aristotelian account of natural generation, according to which ‘man begets man’,<sup>53</sup> for instance, Proclus argues that Aristotle may well succeed in explaining how the formal principle is transmitted from one individual to another of the same species but fails to account for the existence of form as such, the eternity of the natural species, and, in general, the remarkable order of nature—all facts that require the acceptance of transcendent Forms (*in Parm.* III 791.21–795.6; cf. d’Hoine 2008: 73–8). In his epistemological arguments, Proclus takes issue with Aristotle’s account of concept formation and Aristotelian syllogistics, arguing that the universal premises on which proofs are based and which Aristotle ventures in the *Posterior Analytics* to call the ‘causes’ of what is demonstrated cannot derive from sensible particulars but must have ontological priority over them; as a result, they can only derive from transcendent Forms, the existence of which is thereby established (*in Parm.* III 796.10–797.2; cf. Steel 1984: 6–17).

A second digression in book III of Proclus’ *Commentary on the Parmenides* is occasioned by the brief discussion in the dialogue on the range of the Forms (*Parm.* 130b3–e4). Parmenides asks Socrates not only whether he accepts such unproblematic Forms as Likeness and Unlikeness, Unity, Goodness, Beauty, and Justice—all of which belong to classes of Forms well known from other dialogues—but also questions him about substantial Forms (Man and Fire) and even about Forms of vile and worthless things such as hair, mud, and dirt. These few lines of text incite Proclus to insert into his commentary a comprehensive discussion on the range of the Forms, in the course of which he also treats the various classes of Forms that in the Middle Platonic school tradition had become standard topics for discussion: Forms of natural kinds, individuals, parts, accidents, artefacts, and evils.<sup>54</sup> Unlike for Plato, for most of the later Platonists the so-called ‘theory’ of Forms is first and foremost centred around Forms of natural kinds. This is no doubt a consequence of the importance they attach to the *Timaeus* as a guide to Plato’s thought and to the cosmological role that the doctrine of the Forms has had at least from the revival of dogmatic Platonism in the first century onwards, if not already from

Plato's immediate successors in the Academy. When Proclus, in the fourth book of his commentary (*in Parm.* IV 888.12–28), quotes Xenocrates' definition of the Form, he argues that it excludes Forms, for instance, of things that do not come about naturally (artefacts) or even run counter to the order of nature (evils).<sup>55</sup> However, not everything that is part of the natural chain of procession starting from the demiurgic Intellect is caused by a proper Form either. For instance, if Intellect is involved in eternal and changeless contemplation, its thinking cannot include Forms of things that come to be and pass away, such as individual living beings. We have seen in the previous section that the images of the Forms on the ontological levels below Intellect further articulate the particular property of each Form, which manifests itself at each level in a way determined by the participant. According to Proclus (e.g. *in Parm.* III 831.17–19), there are Forms only of universal, natural substances and of their essential properties and perfections. All other features of participating entities, especially those connected to their corporeal appearance, are mere effects of the decline in perfection to which the processions of the Forms are subject. Since for Proclus the Forms proceed to the sensible realm through various intermediate stages, all of which further unfold the essential nature of the Form heading their series, the problem concerning the range of Forms in the *Commentary on the Parmenides* mainly concerns the extent to which the Forms are differentiated at the level of the demiurgic Intellect. This Intellect is, as we have seen, the proximate paradigmatic cause of the sensible world, in which true being has reached its utmost differentiation and in which, as a result, there are separate Forms for all naturally constituted eternal beings. Hence, Proclus accepts Forms for the four elements (which are already distinguished as the four species of living beings in the Paradigm of the *Timaeus*) and for all natural kinds of animals and plants and their essential properties. Individual living beings, their bodily parts and their accidental features, however, come about through the creative force of more particular agents in soul and nature. The natural reason-principles or *logoi*, which are lower images of the Forms, adapt their transcendent paradigms to the ontological structure of the sensible realm, which is determined by temporal existence and corporeal extension. The core of Proclus' discussion on natural Forms in the digression on the range of Forms is nicely summarized in a later passage of the same work:

It is a particular characteristic of the formative cause to be distinguished according to the multiplicity of beings; and for this reason in the realm of first principles where we have the hidden and undistinguished level of being [= One Being], we do not yet have Form, and where we have first distinction [= the Living Being], there we have the primary level of Forms, as for instance there is one Form for the heavenly bodies and another for land animals, and where the division is into more individuals [= the demiurgic Intellect], there arise particular entities, and finally, as the formative creation proceeds, the last among creative forms have

distinguished causes even for parts and for accidents; for the reason-principles in nature contain distinct causal principles even of an eye and a foot and a heart and a finger. (*in Parm.* IV 973.12–23; tr. Morrow and Dillon, slightly mod.)

The *aporiai* which Parmenides raises about the Forms in the remainder of the first part of the dialogue (*Parm.* 130e4ff.) and the interpretation of which fills up the entire fourth book of Proclus' commentary concern the third and fourth problems distinguished: the problem of participation and the nature of the Forms. It is Proclus' conviction that, in the discussion of the *aporiai* in the *Parmenides*, Plato has not only anticipated all objections which later critics of the Forms, including the Peripatetics, have raised against the theory of Forms but also refuted them (e.g., *in Parm.* IV 883.10–13). For the cautious interpreter ready to read between the lines, the dialogue is not aporetic but rather maieutic in that it helps purify wrong conceptions about the Forms and leads the reader to a more adequate understanding of the doctrine.<sup>56</sup> In Proclus' reading of the dialogue, the different *aporiai* discussed by Socrates and Parmenides make one ascend from the enmattered forms in sensible particulars all the way up to their first appearance in the intelligible Paradigm (cf. Steel 1987a). Along the lines of this reading, each of the *aporiai* may well point to a genuine problem for a precise level of forms but can be overcome by ascending to a level of forms closer to their first manifestation.

The first two *aporiai* concern the problem of participation. In *Parmenides* 130e–131e the Eleatic philosopher raises the problem that sensible particulars can neither partake in the whole Form nor in part of it: if distinct particulars were to participate in the whole Form, then the Form would be present in distinct places, which would threaten its unity; yet even on the assumption that each particular only partakes in part of the Form the latter must be divided since different parts would be in different places. Proclus explains, as do most modern interpreters with him, that the problem arises only when participation of sensible particulars in the Forms is taken to be a relation between material bodies, like a single sail cloth covering many people. Once account is taken of the incorporeal nature of form, however, the objection no longer holds since immaterial entities can be simultaneously present to a number of participants. This first *aporia* marks the transition from a material conception of form to the understanding of form as something incorporeal:

[I]t is true that in bodily participation, the participant takes either the whole or a part of what is participated; and if all participation in Forms is neither in the wholes nor in the parts, participation in Forms is not bodily in character.

(*in Parm.* IV 858.17–20; tr. Morrow and Dillon)

Thus, in Proclus' reading, the first *aporia* makes us ascend from sensible particulars to the formal principles present in them. The second *aporia*, which introduces the first version of the well-known 'third man' argument,



shows that participation cannot merely be in forms co-ordinate with their participants, as enmattered forms are, but involves forms that transcend the particulars partaking in them. The objection raised in *Parmenides* 132ab is well known: if each common character shared by a number of particulars is to be explained in terms of participation in a single Form (as e.g. many large things are large by virtue of their participation in the Form of Large, the Large Itself), then there should be another Form to explain the common character of this form and its participants, and after that yet another Form, and so on ad infinitum—an objection that clearly threatens the explicative potential of the doctrine. Proclus (*in Parm.* IV 889.5–17; cf. 912.9–29) explains that the objection is valid only if Forms are taken to be co-ordinate with their participants. In order to avoid the ‘third man’, we must ascend from the immanent formal constituents of bodies, the enmattered forms (*enhula eidê*), to their immediate causes in nature, the physical reason-principles (*logoi phusikoi*), and through these to the higher, even more transcendent, forms in Soul and Intellect. If Forms transcend their participants, then there cannot be any real communion between them in that the property that the Form confers upon its participants is merely a dim image of itself, modified by the decline to which the form is subject by reason of its being participated in by a lower participant (*in Parm.* IV 890.2–11). Thus, Proclus concludes:

From this we should infer that the community between the one Form and its many instances should be not merely nominal, lest we should have to seek next, because of the common name, for some single element common to the one and the many, as unity is the common element in plurality; nor that we should consider the single Form to be synonymous with those of the particulars coming under it, or we shall have to ask what is the common element present in both kinds of being that are covered by the same term; but rather, as has often been said, the common element in the many instances is that of being derived from and having reference to a single source. For what the one Form is primarily, the many grouped under it are derivatively.

(*in Parm.* IV 880.2-9; tr. Morrow and Dillon)

By employing the Aristotelian concept of predication ‘with reference to a single term’ (*pros hen*),<sup>57</sup> and by applying it to the relation between the unparticipated Form and its participated instances, Proclus finds a means to defend what he will call later on, in his discussion of the second version of the ‘third man’ argument (*Parm.* 132c12ff.), a ‘non-reciprocal’ relation of likeness between Forms and their sensible instances.<sup>58</sup> This Proclean solution to the ‘third man’ argument has not failed to also inspire modern interpreters of Plato.<sup>59</sup>

Our discussion of these first two *aporiai* may suffice to illustrate Proclus’ reading of the *Parmenides*, according to which Socrates and Parmenides make the reader ascend to ever higher levels of Forms. This procedure is continued in the following four *aporiai*, which Proclus connects with the problem of the

nature of the Forms (*Parm.* 131e6ff.). For the commentator, establishing the precise nature of the Forms requires determining where the Forms exist and what relation they entertain with the soul and with Intellect<sup>60</sup>—a problem that we have already treated at some length in the previous sections. Whereas the discussion of Socrates' bold suggestion that the Forms may be thoughts in our soul (*Parm.* 132b8–c12) is supposed to shed light on the psychic images of the Forms that make up the soul's essence and are its proper objects of knowledge,<sup>61</sup> the subsequent problems make one finally ascend, through the Forms in Intellect and the intelligible-intellective Forms, to the properly intelligible Forms in the Paradigm. By working his or her way through all the problems raised in the first part of the *Parmenides*, the reader will come to a perfect understanding of the true nature of the Forms, both as they appear for the first time in the intelligible Paradigm and insofar as they proceed to the lower realms of being where they manifest themselves in different guises.<sup>62</sup>

The various levels of forms distinguished by Proclus in his *Commentary on the Parmenides* provide him with an exegetical tool that allows him to incorporate into a coherent whole various, at first sight often apparently contradictory, assertions about the Forms scattered across Plato's dialogues. According to Proclus, the discussions led by Socrates concerning the Forms at various occasions pertain to different stages in the procession of the Forms through the levels of being. As we have seen, the Forms contained in the Living Being of the *Timaeus* are to be associated with the level of Being; the Forms mentioned in the myth of the winged charioteer in the *Phaedrus*, however, pertain to the realm of Life (see e.g. *Theol. plat.* IV 14, 44.8–45.6; in *Parm.* IV 944.6–16); and the discussion on the Forms in the central books of the *Republic* concerns the Forms in their differentiated state in Intellect (e.g., in *Remp.* I 259.18–22), as do the Forms in the Demiurge of the *Timaeus*. Proclus also finds material in Plato pertaining to the levels of forms below Intellect, as, for instance, in the well-known argument from recollection in the *Phaedo*, which the Neoplatonic commentators apply to the forms present in the soul.<sup>63</sup> Sometimes, Plato even refers to forms that do not enter in the chain of procession from the truly intelligible Forms at all, as when he talks about the 'weaver's shuttle itself' in the *Cratylus* (389b5–6), or about the form of impiety in the *Euthyphro* (5d1–5). Even though there are no corresponding Forms of artefacts nor of evil or negative properties, Proclus (in *Parm.* V 985.31–986.6) justifies the use of the vocabulary of the Forms in these contexts by explaining that every quality that may be found in a plurality of sensible instances can be called 'form' in a somewhat loose sense in order to distinguish it from the sensible particulars themselves. But that does not mean that every common property stems from a Form. It will be a task for the philosopher of nature to provide an adequate account of the emergence of these form-like appearances in the material world.<sup>64</sup>

## NOTES

1. See e.g. *Parm. Fr.* 28 B 3 D-K; quoted by Proclus in *Theol. plat.* I 14, 66.3–5; in *Parm.* VII 1152.27. Cf. *Plot., Enn.* V 1 [10] 8.15–22.
2. For this expression, see e.g. *Phd.* 78b6; *Resp.* V 479e7–8; VI 484b3–5; *Soph.* 248a11–12; cf. *Tim.* 28a1–2; 35a1–2; 48e6 etc. As Plotinus already states (*Enn.* V 1 [10] 8.22–30, Plato does not accept, of course, the equally Parmenidean thesis that being is one because the Forms are ‘one and many’).
3. Other sources of this doctrine of the association of being and/or intellect with life are *Arist., Met.* A 7, 1072b26–8 (where it is said that Intellect, being the actuality of thought, is characterized by life) and *Tim.* 39e7–8, which will be discussed in the following section.
4. See e.g. *Plot., Enn.* IV 7 [2] 9.24–6; V 4 [7] 2.43–4; V 5 [32] 2.1–13; VI 2 [43] 6.5–20. See also Hadot (1957; 1968: ii. 213–46).
5. See *Theol. plat.* III 19, 65.5–13; V 30, 109.12–111.28; cf. *Dam., in Parm.* II 54.12–15 Westerink and Combès.
6. Cf. *Theol. plat.* III 6, 24.25–25.1; in *Parm.* IV 904.14–26.
7. For this triad, see e.g. *El. theol.* § 35. The triad of Being, Life, and Intellect is associated with remaining, procession, and reversion in e.g. *Theol. plat.* IV 1, 7.9–13.
8. For a general discussion of the triadic process of remaining, procession, and reversion, see Ch. 3 in this volume.
9. For the origin of this triad, see e.g. Beierwaltes (1979: 158–64) and Dodds (1963: 220–1). For the doctrine, see also Gersh (1978: 45–57).
10. See e.g. *Theol. plat.* III 9, 35.8–17; IV 1, 7.3–9. For the application of this principle, see e.g. III 14, 49.19–50.10 (on the intelligible triad); IV 3, 13.25–15.2 (on the intelligible-intellective triad).
11. *Theol. plat.* III 9, 35.1–7; cf. in *Tim.* I 230.5–231.9, which shows that this doctrine of the One Being primarily relies on the *Sophist* and the *Parmenides*. For the way in which Being is produced by the higher principles of Limit and Unlimited, see Ch. 4 in this volume.
12. However, for both theological and philosophical reasons that go beyond the scope of this contribution, Intellect is analysed by Proclus as a hebdomadic and not as an enneadic structure. For a scheme of this complicated structure, see Appendix I.
13. See e.g. Alcinous, *Didasc.* IX 163.15–16 and 30–1. For the history of this doctrine, which can also be found in Seneca (*Ep.* 65.7) and Philo of Alexandria (*De opif. mund.* § 16 and § 20) and the origins of which may even be traced back as far as Xenocrates, see Dillon (2011).
14. Cf. *Enn.* V 5 [32], which Porphyry has transmitted under the title ‘That the intelligibles are not outside the Intellect, and on the Good’; cf. also the famous anecdote in *V. Plot.* § 18.
15. Procl., in *Tim.* I 322.20–6. Proclus’ treatment of Plotinus in this context finds support in the Plotinian identification of Intellect with the intelligibles on the one hand and of Intellect with the Demiurge on the other (e.g. *Enn.* II 3 [52] 18.14–16, V 1 [10] 8.5 and V 9 [5] 3.26). This classification may not, however, do complete justice to the subtleties of Plotinus’ position: see e.g. the observations in Pépín (1956: 56 n. 2 and 47–8).

16. See e.g. in *Tim.* I 418.30–419.19; III 100.1–101.9; for an elaborate discussion of the three intelligible triads in the *Timaeus*, see *Theol. plat.* III 15–18. Cf. also Opsomer (2000b).
17. In *Tim.* I 311.1–10 and *Theol. plat.* V 13. For Proclus' understanding of the Platonic Demiurge, see also Opsomer (2000a) and Ch. 7 in this volume.
18. For Proclus, Forms are most properly objects of thoughts (in *Parm.* IV 892.13–15); since the object of thought is prior to the thought itself, the intelligible has priority over intellect (in *Parm.* IV 899.19–32).
19. For Aristotle, see e.g. *De an.* III 4, 429a27–9 (the soul, being the place of the forms, is the forms potentially); 429b29–430a2; 8, 431b20–3; *Met.* A 7, 1072b19–21; for Plotinus, see e.g. *Enn.* V 5 [32] 1–2 (esp. e.g. 2.19–20) and V 3 [49] 4; cf. II 9 [33] 1.46–50. See Procl., in *Parm.* IV 900.6–9 and 901.2–7.
20. See e.g. *El. theol.* § 167, 144.22–5: 'Every intellect has intuitive knowledge of itself: but the primal Intellect knows itself only, and intellect and its object are here numerically one; whereas each subsequent intellect knows simultaneously itself and its priors, so that its object is in part itself but in part its source' (tr. Dodds, slightly mod.).
21. *Theol. plat.* V 5, 22.5–20; V 17, 62.4–63.19; in *Tim.* I 335.21–4; in *Tim.* I 394.2–4; III 102.31–103.7.
22. In *Tim.* I 323.20–2; 325.4–8; cf. 418.3–12; 432.25–433.3; III 103.5–7; *Theol. plat.* III 9, 35.17–18; III 15, 53.6–21; cf. also Syrianus: in *Met.* 106.14–16.
23. In *Tim.* I 316.12–317.5; 432.18–25; Cf. already Syr., in *Met.* 106.14–16. For a discussion of this doctrine, cf. Gersh (1978: 98–102).
24. In *Tim.* I 323.6–8; 360.17–21; 432.12–25. For the intelligible Intellect as a first multiplicity, see *Theol. plat.* III 14, 51.20–52.11; V 12, 41.7–18; for the doctrine that there are different levels of Forms with increasing multiplicity, see e.g. *El. theol.* § 177; in *Parm.* IV 959.7–960.6.
25. In *Tim.* I 271.11–15; 401.31–402.11; in *Parm.* IV 910.19–28; *Theol. Plat.* V 17, 61.4–14.
26. On this doctrine, see e.g. Michalewski (2014: 91–3).
27. See *El. theol.* §§ 31 and 34; Cf. in *Tim.* I 267.1–12; in *Parm.* III 788.8–19; IV 842.30–27; 922.2–16; cf. Syr., in *Met.* 10.32–11.5; 117.28–32. See also Steel (1987b).
28. See e.g. *Enn.* III 8 [30] 9; V 3 [49] 10–12 (esp. 11.25–30); V 1 [10] 9.7–12; V 6 [24] 3.22–5; VI 7 [38] 37.18–24.
29. This characterization plays a significant role in his arguments for the existence of Intellect before the self-moving soul: see e.g. *El. theol.* § 20, 22.16–18; *Theol. plat.* I 14, 65.17–21; for the Forms as immobile causes, see e.g. in *Parm.* III 795.7–27.
30. The expression is used in in *Tim.* II 251.5, where Iamblichus seems to be credited for coining the term. For this problem, see Gersh (1973: 7–11); cf. Dodds (1963: 207).
31. In *Parm.* II 762.10–23; III 786.13–788.1; 791.7–20; See, however, in *Tim.* I 335.30–336.3 (with Dodds' commentary on p. 151), where it is said that the paradigm operates  $\tau\hat{\omega}$   $\epsilon\acute{\iota}\nu\alpha\iota$ , whereas the Demiurge creates  $\tau\hat{\omega}$   $\epsilon\pi\epsilon\rho\gamma\epsilon\acute{\iota}\nu$ . Perhaps the two views can be reconciled if the Demiurge operates  $\tau\hat{\omega}$   $\epsilon\acute{\iota}\nu\alpha\iota$  insofar as he creates in accordance with the paradigm that is in him.
32. In *Parm.* III 791.10–20; in *Tim.* I 390.6–27; Syr., in *Met.* 163.27. The metaphysical support for this theory is presented in *El. theol.* §§ 25 and 174.

33. See also Saffrey and Westerink (1968–97: v. 181 n. 2).
34. For the doctrine of double activity in Plotinus, see e.g. *Enn.* II 9 [33] 8.16–26; V 3 [49] 7.18–34; V 4 [7] 1.21–41; 2.19–33; see also Emilsson (2007: 22–68) and Michalewski (2014: 115–35).
35. For the so-called ‘dilemma’ of participation in Plato, see *Parm.* 131a4–e4; for Aristotle’s criticism of the notion of participation and of the ‘separation’ of the Forms, see e.g. *Arist., Met.* A 9, 991a20–b9 (cf. *M* 5, 1079b24–1080a8) and *Met.* Z 14.
36. See e.g. *Alc., Didasc.* IV 155.39–41; one finds similar distinctions in many other Middle Platonic texts: see e.g. *Sen., Ep.* 58.18–21; *Calc., in Tim.* § 273, 278.4–7; § 329, 323.11–16; § 337, 330.19–331.4.
37. Cf. also *Parm.* 129a1–4; for Proclus’ interpretation of this passage, see in *Parm.* III 783.7–15 and 797.5–798.18. For his interpretation of the *Tim.* passage: see in *Parm.* IV 842.2–11 and 844.13–26; Procl. in *Tim.* apud Philop., *De aet. mund.* 364.5ff.; cf. also *Phd.* 100d3–8 and 102d6–8.
38. For this doctrine, see *El. theol.* §§ 23–4; for the levels of participation, see e.g. in *Parm.* VI 1069.21–1070.12. In *Tim.* I 240.6–8 (= Iambl., in *Tim.* Fr. 54 Dillon) seems to imply that Iamblichus already employed this distinction.
39. Cf. in *Parm.* II 711.3–9; III 797.3–798.18. and IV 850.16–23.
40. For the expression *πλήρωμα εἰδῶν*, see e.g. *El. theol.* § 177, 156.1–4: ‘Every intellect is a plenitude of Forms (*πλήρωμα . . . εἰδῶν*), but certain of them embrace more universal and others more specific Forms; and while the higher intellects possess in a more universal manner all that their consequents possess more specifically, the lower also possess more specifically all that their priors have more universally.’ For the manifestation of this plenitude at various levels, see e.g. in *Parm.* III 788.2; 800.10; *Theol. Plat.* III 19, 65.25–66.3; IV 32, 96.13–17; in *Tim.* I 440.14–15.
41. See e.g. in *Parm.* III 789.17–24; cf. *Syr., in Met.* 27.30–7; 39.20–6; 82.14–18 and 29–32; for the doctrine of the psychic *logoi*, see also Ch. 9 in this volume.
42. For the relation between natural reason-principles and enmattered forms, see also Ch. 7 in this volume.
43. See e.g. in *Parm.* IV 903.28–904.26, and the formalization of this doctrine in *El. theol.* § 97; on these and similar texts, see also d’Hoine (2011a: 284–9).
44. See e.g. *Sen., Ep.* 58.19.2–3; *Alc., Didasc.* IX 163.23–4; *Calc., in Tim.* § 304, 306.6–7 et al.; cf. also Dörrie and Baltes (1998: 338–42).
45. In *Tim.* I 2.29–3.19; see e.g. *Sen., Ep.* 65.7–8: *his quintam Plato adicit exemplar, quam ipse idean vocat*. Cf. also Steel (2003b: 181).
46. Proclus develops this criticism in the introduction to his *Commentary on the Timaeus* (I 2.15ff.). For a more elaborate discussion of it, see e.g. Steel (2003b). For the role of form and matter in Proclus’ understanding of the natural world, see Ch. 7 in this volume.
47. For the distinction between *αἴτιον* and *σύναιτιον*, see esp. *El. theol.* § 75, 70.30–72.4; in *Tim.* I 2.29–3.4; in *Parm.* IV 888.15–18; VI 1059.13–15; *Herm., in Phdr.* II 106.19–23 Couvreur = 112.3–7 Lucarini–Moreschini. The distinction is made by Plato most clearly in *Phd.* 99a4–b6, even though the term *σύναιτιον* is not used there. Cf. Dam., in *Phd.* II 66.

48. For this association of the three types of cause in the Forms, see e.g. in *Parm.* IV 983.1–14; 910.12–28; Syr., in *Met.* 82.2–13; 117.8–12; Dam., in *Phd.* I 417.1–2; Procl. *apud* Dam., in *Phil.* 114.1–5.
49. On Proclus' interpretation of the *Parmenides*, see Chs 4 (first principles) and 10 (theology) in this volume.
50. On the Neoplatonic curriculum and the reading order of the dialogues, see also Ch. 2 in this volume.
51. See e.g. in *Met.* 108.31–109.4; in d'Hoine (2004: 23–7), I have argued that this list most likely goes back to Iamblichus.
52. For a more detailed discussion of these arguments for the existence of Platonic Forms, see Steel (1984), Cleary (2002), and d'Hoine (2008).
53. See e.g. Arist., *Phys.* II 1, 193b8; *Met.* Z 7, 1032a25; A 3, 1070a8 and 27–8; quoted in *Parm.* III 791.21–2.
54. See the lists of things for which there are no Forms in Alc., *Didasc.* IX 163.24–31; Plot., *Enn.* V 9 [5] 10–13; Syr., in *Met.* 38.36–39.6; 8.13–27; 107.5–108.4; 114.2–13. For other sources, see also Dörrie and Baltes (1998: 70–9 and 336–50). I have discussed Proclus' rejection of Forms of artefacts in d'Hoine (2006a, 2006b), of individuals in d'Hoine (2010), of accidental attributes in (2011b), and of evils in (2011c).
55. According to Proclus, the definition also excludes the existence of Forms of individuals, whose existence is limited in time.
56. In *Parm.* IV 838.19–20; 849.2–3; 856.25–8; 873.31–874.6; 907.8–9.
57. For Proclus' use of the  $\pi\rho\sigma\varsigma\ \acute{\epsilon}\nu$  predication, see e.g. in *Parm.* IV 939.15–19 and I 709.5–11.
58. In *Parm.* IV 911.27–913.11; 915.13–23; for Proclus' interpretation of the 'third man' argument, see also Gerson (2011). Proclus' solution to the 'third man' problem is very similar to Syrianus': see e.g. Opsomer (2004). For Proclus' understanding of the non-reciprocal likeness that obtains between sensible particulars and Forms, see d'Hoine (2014).
59. See e.g. Cornford (1950: 93–5); Gerson (2011: 105–6).
60. See in *Parm.* IV 891.13–16, where Proclus identifies the fourth problem concerning the Forms, i.e. on the nature of the Forms, with the question as to where the Forms are found.
61. For this doctrine, see Steel (1997a), Helmig (2012: 264–72) and Ch. 9 in this volume.
62. For a comprehensive outline of the entire series of the Forms, see in *Parm.* III 803.5–804.26 and IV 969.9–971.7. Cf. Steel (1987a: 123–6).
63. *Phd.* 74a9ff. On this passage, see e.g. Procl., in *Parm.* III 788.20–789.17, a text that is to be read with Dam., in *Phd.* I 274; II 15; Ol., in *Phd.* XII 1; Syr., in *Met.* 82.20–9.
64. I would like to thank Frans de Haas, Alessandro Linguiti, and Marije Martijn for their comments on earlier drafts of this text.

## Proclus on the *Psychê*

### World Soul and the Individual Soul

*John F. Finamore and Emilie Kutash*

In this chapter we turn to the soul. For the ancient Greeks generally, soul encompassed the notions of life, self-motion, growth and decay, nourishment, perception, imagination, and thought. For Platonists the soul was an immaterial substance that inhabited the body and caused it to behave in certain ways. Following Plato and Aristotle, they conceived of the soul as a hierarchy of faculties from intellectual thought at the top to the lower functions of motion, nutrition, and growth. The rational soul was separable from the body and immortal. All living creatures, from the gods to lower animals and plants, had souls, but not every living thing had every kind or aspect of soul. Plants lack any but the lowest soul, and animals lack reason. But life at every level depends on the presence of the immaterial soul. Just as individuals have a soul, so too has the cosmos. Following Plato's doctrine in the *Timaeus* and *Laws*, the World Soul provided motion and life for the cosmos.

Neoplatonists, including Proclus, placed souls as intermediaries between the One and Intellect above and nature below. Soul, unlike the higher entities, exists in time and space. Its intermediate position meant that it could rise to higher-order intellectual thought with the Intellect and also descend into and interact with material nature. Just as individual souls possess a hierarchy of potential faculties, so too there was a hierarchy of different ranks of soul. After the gods and World Soul, the later Neoplatonists from Iamblichus onwards posited the superior classes of soul (angels, daemons, heroes), followed by individual human souls, and then animal souls and plants.

To understand how Proclus and other later Neoplatonists conceived Soul, one must understand its relationship to what is above it. The One is simple unity without temporality and without differentiation. It exists above even Eternity and is Eternity's source. Intellect, which (although a plurality) is permanent and unchanging, is exempt from the disunity and movement that

existence in time would entail. The Soul, on the other hand, though devolving from the Intellect, allows for temporality, which in turn involves a movement forward in time. As far as its cognitive powers are concerned, the One has no thoughts, for thought requires differentiation and the One is always unified. Intellect, devolving from the One, disperses unity and adds the multiplicity entailed in Ideas. Further, Intellect intellegizes its object but remains separate from it. It is therefore dyadic in structure. Because it exists in eternity, it cognizes all of the intelligible objects at once. There is no time involved. Temporality, whereby ideas can occur one at a time and sequentially, therefore, must be consigned to the lower hypostasis of Soul, which must think sequentially and exist within the boundaries of time as opposed to eternity. Thus, there is a loss of perfection as one descends the ontological scale, and a concomitant dependency on the higher entities. The soul acts within nature in time, but it also has links to the Intellect and the One. It is, as Plotinus had said, ‘amphibious’ (*Enn.* IV 8 [6] 4.31–5). It lives a double life: it is trapped in the world of time but it also possesses the potentiality to rise above it through becoming attuned with the Intellect and through the intervention of the gods.

In a manner typical of the ‘scholasticism’ of late Neoplatonism, Proclus makes subtle divisions in his hierarchy of souls, for example by differentiating various types of rational souls. There is a ‘first Soul’ (*El. theol.* § 21) or ‘universal Soul’ (§ 109) that is unparticipated and constitutes the first order above the cosmos (§ 164–6). Immediately after this universal and hypercosmic Monad follows a plurality of hypercosmic, or divine souls (*El. theol.* § 166 and *in Crat.* § 169). These are psychic gods who never descend. Each of them is again the monad of a chain of souls belonging specifically with that divinity (*El. theol.* § 204).<sup>1</sup> After the divine souls follow the souls that are always in the company of their gods; only then come the particular souls. They divide into souls that are sometimes in the company of gods, moving between the divine and the material realm, and souls that are always descended. A variation of this last division is that into souls that descend without harm, and souls that become corrupted in their descent. Even the last subtype is capable of reversion, but only occasionally.<sup>2</sup>

In this chapter, we will consider especially the World Soul and the particular souls, and their relation to number.<sup>3</sup>

### 6.1. WORLD SOUL

Plato famously posited, in his dialogue *Timaeus*, that the World is ensouled and that an entity he termed the World Soul is the agency that provides its structure and makes it move and change in line with reason. In this dialogue, he gives an account of how the Demiurge fashioned the World Soul and set it



in the centre of the cosmos (34b3–4). This notion of the soul reaching from the centre of the cosmos outward to all its parts gave birth to multiple explanations in the Platonic schools.<sup>4</sup> Iamblichus had argued that Plato was referring not to the World Soul here, but rather to the Hypercosmic Soul, the Monad that rules over the entire hypostasis. Thus, the Hypercosmic Soul was the ‘centre of the cosmos’, not in a spatial sense, but in the sense that the cosmos participated in it, while it sat in splendour above, separate but everywhere (*in Tim.* Fr. 50 Dillon). Proclus’ teacher Syrianus chose another tack, which Proclus adopted. The soul in question is the World Soul, but it has two aspects: a hypercosmic one as well as one that declines downward toward nature (II 105.30–1). The World Soul is thus both transcendent and immanent:

We do not position the commanding faculty of the soul in the centre (for this commanding faculty transcends [ἐξήρρηται] the universe). Instead we find there is a certain power of the soul that is guardian over the whole order, for no other part of the universe is such that shifting the part around could be more utterly destructive of the whole than shifting the centre and the power of the centre—the point around which the whole universe dances (περὶ ἣν ἡ χορεία τοῦ παντός). (*in Tim.* II 107.14–19; tr. Baltzly)<sup>5</sup>

Its double nature, then, is more in keeping with what soul is (as we have seen), but it also allows it the position of the Monad of the entire realm of encosmic souls.<sup>6</sup> As such, the World Soul is both the transcendent cause of that realm and is in immediate contact with Intellect above, and is also part of the cosmos, ruling and controlling it, making the cosmos a living being.

A key differentiating feature between Intellect and Soul is Soul’s motion in the realm of time. Intellect, as eternal and unmoving, cannot be the immediate cause of temporal motion in the cosmos. Intellect provides the Forms and contains the paradigm for world production. It is not in motion itself. Since motion is necessary in the creation and in changes in time that take place within nature, the World Soul is assigned the task of actualizing the formal parameters that the Intellect has conceived. In the *Commentary on the Timaeus*, Proclus divides the Demiurge’s shaping of the cosmos into ten ‘gifts to the world’ (*in Tim.* II 5.11–31). Psychic life (*hê psychôsis*) is the seventh gift (*in Tim.* II 103.27–30). The World Soul has access to and participates in the Intellect and also in the hypostasis Life, one of Proclus’ higher levels of powers in the universe. It has the ability, therefore, both to actualize the body of the world and to inject it with permanent form and structure derived from Intellect.

For Proclus, as for all other Neoplatonists, the One is the source of Being and it is unmoved, unknown, and totally transcendent. Because of the absolute unity of the One, it cannot function in such a way that would cause it to be divided and diversified. Since the creation of the universe requires multiplicity of this sort, the task of supplying it with diversity is relegated to the role played

by the World Soul. Further, the One is totally excised from existence. It cannot be known, for we can only speak about it indirectly and deficiently through the doubly negative predications of negative theology (a means of making propositions about God or the One without saying what it is, just saying what it is not). It has nothing to do with motion or change, the signature features of a living cosmos. The One is eternally at rest. With all these ideas about the One's eternal residence, beyond all being and change, the only entity that can supply what the One does not have is the Soul. As Plato in the *Sophist* stipulates (248c–249b), and Proclus endorses, the entity which accounts for life, motion, and creative energy is the Soul:

for it is life generating itself and producing itself. But all life is motion. So that if everything which lives is moved, that which lives through itself is moved and that which always lives is always moved, in accordance with Life, but not in accordance with Intellect. Hence the soul is always moved and yet not always. For it is Intellect potentially, but life actually. (*in Tim.* III 335.17–23)

Plato in discussing the creation of the world in the *Timaeus* says that the Demiurge 'placed Soul in the middle of the body stretching through all and enveloping the outermost body of the universe itself' (*Tim.* 34b3–6). Proclus, following Plotinus, has the World Soul responsible for the structure of the universe, one that is mathematical and formed of ratios and proportion.<sup>7</sup> It is also responsible for movement and change that allows the universe to come to be and at the same time to conform to reason. It is an encosmic soul and as such it both transcends the physical world and is immanent in it.<sup>8</sup>

In the *Laws* Plato proclaims that soul has the 'power of self-moving motion' (*δυναμένην αὐτὴν αὐτὴν κινεῖν κίνησιν*, *Laws* X 896a1). This formulation, which applies the property of movement, something usually associated with the physical world, to the invisible world of Soul, was perplexing to ancient interpreters. The idea of the soul's self-movement put into question the very unity of the soul and provided Aristotle with a basis for attack.<sup>9</sup> Aristotle claimed that self-movement would entail division of the indivisible soul. Movement, after all, involves both a mover and something moved. Proclus' World Soul, as the psychic life of the universe, resolves the problem of the co-presence of movement and unity by invoking a chain of continuity between Being and Intellect and Soul. Intellect provides unity and intellectual parameters, while Being itself is associated with Life. But it is the World Soul that brings the contributions of Being and Intellect to the self-sufficient living being that is the universe, by giving it unity, forming it, and animating it.

Proclus conceives of the universe as spherical and embodied and ensouled, and this latter quality is due to the fact that it is permeated throughout and centred by Soul. The following passage expresses this in a succinct form. Proclus is explaining that the spherical and therefore geometrically perfect limit of the universe is due to the presence of Soul and its ability to impart

intellectual limits to the world. These limits are provided by Intellect, given to the world by Soul, and originated in the One.

For the proximate limit of its body is smoothness but the transcendent (ἐξηρημένος) limit of the world is Soul, and prior to this [limit there is] Intellect, for this is the boundary of the soul itself. But even prior to Intellect is the single universal divinity, bringing together the plurality. (*in Tim.* II 80.1–4; tr. Baltzly)

The Life of the Soul is a manifestation of its connection with higher sources of its energy. The reader of Proclus must always keep in mind that, for Proclus, there is a chain of being which is bestowed upon the universe from the highest to the lowest links. This includes the sources of energy or life that is bestowed from the highest to lowest links in this chain. For causality to take place in the physical world it must be imbued with Soul. Soul provides the link between an Eternity at rest and the motion in time that characterizes the created universe. Soul, as well, because of its connection to Intellect, provides the ratios and proportion that stretches out the universe in space according to mathematical parameters. Soul, then, is a precondition for the omnipresence on all levels of 'spiritual [i.e. non-physical] motion' as it converts to physical motion and activates nature in time and space.<sup>10</sup> Proclus ascribes a motion-ability to both mortal and immortal souls and any souls in between based on their self-movement.<sup>11</sup> The World Soul is the arch-animator but there is a plethora of self-moving movers: divine souls and daemons responsible for such agency in all facets of creation (*in Tim.* II 106.2–29).

Proclus' most detailed discussion of the World Soul per se is in the *Commentary on the Timaeus* (II 102–317, ad *Tim.* 34b–37c). Here Soul (presumably the World Soul), encapsulates and infuses the cosmos. Concomitantly, Soul is its control centre and the axis upon which all the upper and lower hypostases converge. It permeates the whole creation and commands it as well. Unchanging and everlasting, Soul is the seat of change and movement in time. It also has the ability to project images of the Intellect's Forms onto the world. The World Soul has its own kinds of Forms, which Proclus calls 'projected reason principles' (*proballomenoi logoi*). This expression reminds us of *phantasia*, or imagination, the capacity allowing the human soul to create figures with extension but without physical matter.<sup>12</sup> Perhaps Proclus had in mind something similar for the World Soul, as a unique and ingenious way of treating the fact that eternal, unchanging, and motionless principles have to be instantiated in objects that exist in space and time. It is as if the imagination is a screen and on it ideas can be projected, which accounts for their presence in the world of objects. The Soul is the agency that makes that possible and also makes possible that the universe should operate in symphony with the Forms. Soul mediates between the intelligible and physical world. It has the capability to maintain continuity through its source in Eternity and yet can be divided as it moves in time and space.<sup>13</sup>

While the essence of the soul is indivisible, eternal, and unchangeable, its activity manifests division, temporality, and change. It can contact the supermundane (II 105.30–1) by its synaptic connection to Intellect (on their ‘touching’ see later in this chapter), but has a multitude of powers and so is able to divide around the world (II 106.2–3). Present to all parts of the universe it is at the same time its centre. When Proclus describes the Soul as permeating the world right out to its extremities, he is referring to its ability to expand itself through time and space. When he discusses the World Soul as the centre of the universe he is describing a different aspect of it, namely the fact that it is both immanent in these ways, but at the same time it is exempt (*exêirêmenos*) and transcends the universe.<sup>14</sup> The Soul, after all, is an unmoved mover as well as being self-moving.

Proclus describes Soul as animating the middle through its guardian powers, thus making an oblique reference to Zeus. (For Proclus the gods and goddesses are never far away from the abstract concepts he is putting forward.)

By virtue of its guardian powers it holds together the centre. (For the whole sphere is steered from thence and converges on the centre. Moreover all the troubles in the world have been corralled in the middle and it is necessary that there should be a divine guardian who is capable of marshalling them and keeping them within the proper bounds...the Pythagoreans call the middle ‘the tower of Zeus ...’ ...) (in *Tim.* II 106.15–23;<sup>15</sup> tr. Baltzly)

How can the same entity possess stasis and movement, division and unity, be guardian of intellectual limits and impart powers over all four elements, *and* be present and transcendent, at the same time? The Soul clearly has a bipolar nature, and yet it is not subject to disunity. In some ways, it can be seen as plastic and able to stretch to encompass its domain. Carlos Steel refers to *Elements of Theology* to help clarify how this can work.<sup>16</sup> Propositions 106–7 state that Soul is eternal in substance, while temporal in activity. Propositions 192–3 add that Soul belongs, in substance, to the order of true beings that subsist perpetually. It belongs to the world of becoming only in relation to its activities. In the *Timaeus*, Plato described the World Soul as consisting of two circles: the Circle of the Same and the Circle of the Other (*Tim.* 35a–b with in *Tim.* II 166.15ff.). Soul contains the duality of Same and Other within its own unity. The universe displays both the symmetry of the Living-being-itself (i.e. the cosmos as an intelligible unity) and the asymmetry of motion in time and space. The Soul possesses this dual capacity while not being divided. The higher levels of reality do not have this capacity and that is how the Soul can operate in the universe of becoming. Still, the fact that one entity, soul, can be moving and unmoved, temporal and eternal, multiple and a unity demands explanation. Soul contains simultaneous but disparate attributes, incorporating stability from Intellect and its own essence, receiving life and power from a higher source, thereby being active in time and space.

Proclus' idea is that a complete universe (having Intellect, Soul, and Body) must have a middle which functions as a psychic source of power. The energies stemming from this source extend to the furthest reaches of the universe and provide the universe with a stable essence. Proclus describes this power, as we saw earlier, as the 'guardian over the whole order', and 'the point around which the whole universe dances' shifting which would be 'utterly destructive of the whole' (*in Tim.* II.107.14–19).<sup>17</sup> Aristotle was the first philosopher to seriously discuss physics in great detail, including an elaborate discussion of both motion and time. In Aristotle's physics of motion, which Proclus comments on in his own *Elements of Physics*, Proclus found a construct that helps him describe the types of continuity and discontinuity that pertain to Intellect, Soul, and sensible world. Aristotle (*Phys.* VI 1, 231a21–232a22) had stipulated that things which are continuous (*sunechê*) are those wherein the boundaries are one. Things that are contiguous (*haptomena*, *Phys.* VI 1, 231a23) are those in which the boundaries are joined or touch each other (as the verb *ἅπτω* can be translated),<sup>18</sup> those that are successive (*ephexê*) have nothing that is a unity in between them. Those things that are continuous (*ephexê*) will have a continuous (circular) movement and will not have discontinuities (points, ends, limits). The contiguous touches both what is continuous and the discontinuous since it is adjacent to them. The 'successive' is totally discontinuous. For Proclus, these are associated respectively with Intellect, Soul, and the physical world. The Soul then is related to the contiguous, which means that it is able to have contact with both the higher level, Intellect, and the lowest level, the physical world. The unmoved mover, which Proclus usually identifies with the demiurgic Intellect, will not have any of these. The first book of Proclus' *Elements of Physics* begins with Aristotle's description of these types of motion, and Proclus paid very careful attention to them. The physics of motion, for Proclus, is directly related to the theory of the soul because psychic activity is the source of motion in the universe (*'ψυχὴ μὲν οὖν κινήσεως αἰτία'*) (*in Tim.* I 413.20). He adopts Aristotle's definitions because there is a perfect description in them for his theory that the Soul has 'contact' with the two extremes, the totally successive and the totally unified.<sup>19</sup> Proclus makes Aristotle's notion of contact, then, the basis for the capacity that Soul possesses to span both the invisible world of Intellect and the physical world of the sensible.

These stipulations will be very important in the later discussion of the mortal soul's limitations when it comes to union (*henôsis*) with the One, or with Intellect. The human soul has limitations that accrue from contact with the physical and its capacity to assimilate to the higher levels of reality depends upon its ability to have contact with Intellect and the higher hypostases. Here the notion that soul has 'contact' or touches the higher hypostasis, then, in both individual and World Soul, creates a mechanism for continuity within discontinuities. Soul has active functions that allow it to impart to the physical

world the stable principles it can access by way of its contact with Intellect: the human soul can aspire to contact with its higher hypostases in its spiritual quest. Proclus examines the figure of speech used by Plato:

The soul was woven in every direction from the middle to the extreme edge of the heaven, and covered it from the outside in a circle (ἡ δ' ἐκ μέσου πρὸς τὸν ἔσχατον οὐρανὸν πάντῃ διαπλακεῖσα κύκλῳ τε αὐτὸν ἔξωθεν περικαλύψασα).

(*Tim.* 36e2–4)

The life of the Soul does not leave anything external and out of the range of its coverage or providential care (*in Tim.* II 108.29–32). The continuity characteristic of the Eternal One Being supervenes upon the successive and divided characteristic of the physical world through the ability of the living Psyche to connect or touch Intellect, which in turn is derivative of the One Being and then spread throughout the universe. This is a further sense of the idea that Soul is a living intermediary between the physical and intelligible world. It is in the position of the contiguous of the *Physics*, in contact with the higher and lower hypostases, Intellect and the material world respectively. Touching both centre and extremity at the same time, it covers the world as Soul extends its powers through everything. At the same time, it is continuous and can contract or revert, as it is simultaneously in touch with the intangible Intellect, the bearer of continuity and its own causes. Soul, then, rather than being disruptive of unity, is the *guarantor* of continuity (one providence, one life, etc.) in the physical world. Through self-motion it spans the discontinuities of the physical world, and through its self-constitution it supplies continuity. It alone brings life into the universe. Proclus names three aspects of the soul's life (power, energy, and essence), explaining that its continuity comes from its essence, its powers from Intellect, and its activity from life.

## 6.2. THE SOUL AND NUMBER

Plato's *Timaeus* provided the philosophers of antiquity with an account of the Soul which clearly stipulated that the World Soul is created according to the laws of mathematical symmetry and musical concord (*Tim.* 35a–36d). From this Proclus constructed an elaborate mathematical account of the ratios and harmonies of the World Soul according to the diatonic scale formulated originally by the Pythagoreans, Archytas and Philolaus, and used in the dividing of the scales harmoniously in the musical canon.<sup>20</sup> The World Soul in the tradition of Plato's *Timaeus* is composed of three elements: an element of 'being', one of 'sameness' (*tauton*), and one of distinction or 'otherness' (*thateron*). In the subsequent tradition, the 'sameness' and 'otherness' were sometimes taken to correspond to the universal and intelligible order of truth

and the world of sensible and particular existences respectively. For Proclus, all three elements are intermediate species between the universal Intellect and the universal corporeal nature, the sameness more related to the indivisibility of Intellect, the otherness more to the divisibility of the corporeal.<sup>21</sup> Mathematical ratio, applied to the divisions of the cosmos, allows the many and divided to be at the same time unified within an overarching structure.<sup>22</sup> This is how Soul can create a world of difference and change when it comes to the creation of the cosmos and yet be at one with the unity that Intellect and Being and Life as higher hypostases can provide. Proclus elaborates on the account of this mathematical creation with elaborate technical precision, possibly betraying the influence of Hellenistic musicology, which was quite influential by late antiquity.

Speusippus and Xenocrates, leaders of Plato's Academy immediately following Plato's death, took the equating of the World Soul with geometry and mathematics quite literally. The soul, they speculated, was number.<sup>23</sup> Proclus certainly respects and elaborates upon the mathematical and geometrical infrastructure as central to world construction. He does not stop there however. Because he posits Life and animation as essential qualities of Soul and because at the same time the World Soul transcends the divisible as we know it from mathematics, Soul cannot be reduced to number or to geometry. Proclus must find a way to allow the Soul to be 'spiritual', while *preserving* the idea of mathematical infrastructure. Mathematical Platonism alone cannot support the self-movement of Soul, its life in time, or its stable essence. On these grounds Proclus opposes theories that hold that the discontinuities associated with the Soul's role in projecting ratios upon the cosmos constitute its essence. He distances himself from the Academy Platonists' mathematical account of the soul's constitution and launches a critique of his predecessors, such as (an otherwise unknown) Aristander, and the Middle Platonists Numenius of Apamea and Severus, in his *Commentary on the Timaeus* (II 153.15–154.26). He does not want the idea that number is connected to the Soul to mean that it is material in any way. He attacks those who consider Soul to be a geometrical or mathematical hypostasis, those who assert that it consists of point and interval, and those who associate it with Monad and Dyad. At *in Tim.* II 152.6–26 (cf. 193.13–14) Proclus argues that even though Soul is associated with division it is not infinitely divisible as are bodies. He states that the soul is not a number, because number in its existence as a multiplicity (*plêthos*) is associated with matter (II 138.17–23). Proclus writes that 'since Plato in no ways makes the soul a number, it is absurd to seek the numerical principles from which it is composed' (*in Tim.* II 154.10–12; tr. Baltzly). Understanding Proclus' theory of the Soul's capacity for imagination helps to clarify the role of number. The Soul has the power to project ratios and proportion onto the cosmos, following from the idea that the Intellect through the Soul can project its ideas on the screen of the imagination. That is how the Soul is associated

with number, not through its own composition. The Soul, in touch with Intellect within it as a source of number, possesses the power to project this in its activity. This does not mean that the Soul is itself number. Those who regard the Soul as somehow geometrical are equally culpable. Proclus is critical of Severus, for example, a Middle Platonist who wrote a book *On the Soul* and who defines the soul as geometrical form. Severus interpreted the soul's indivisible essence ('sameness') as the point (*sêmeion*), the divisible essence ('otherness') as dimension (*diastasis*), using terms from geometry (*in Tim.* II 153.21–3). Proclus also disagrees with those who assert that the soul is a number, making it consist of the Monad and indefinite Dyad (*aoristos duas*), as did Xenocrates.

One way to reconcile the activity and the intellectual formal parameters of the Soul is explained by Carlos Steel (1997a: 295–7). The *logoi* for mathematics exist in the state of being in the gods but in the state of activity for the Soul.<sup>24</sup> Being and thought, essence and activity coincide, but not at the level of the soul. He explains that it is necessary to distinguish between the *logoi* that remain 'eternally in the psychic essence' and discursive temporal acts through which the soul projects the different *logoi* one by one.

Life is an important Chaldaean and Mithraic principle and is not numerical and measurable but infinite. Proclus objected to the idea of the Soul as number partly for this important reason. Within this theological tradition, Proclus maintains that Soul's life and powers are far more important than the infrastructure that it can impart. Within the hierarchy that constitutes the larger map of Proclus' ontology, the Soul is provided with stability by an unmoved mover. Movement and Life are separate matters. The soul has a life that is not merely kinesthetic but is also tied to the life of Intellect, which is spiritual and unmoving. Soul has continuity via its relation to Intellect and Being, but is discontinuous through its own motions and possesses Life in both modes. The individual Soul, then, which is analogous to the World Soul, inherits a double pattern by which it can disperse and dissipate into material reality or revert and consolidate in self-sameness and transcend the material world.

### 6.3. THE INDIVIDUAL SOULS

The basic doctrines of Proclus concerning the human soul can be found in its most succinct form in §§ 184–211 of *Elements of Theology*. Here Proclus explains its divine origin and its descent from higher levels of reality as well as its ascent back to them in reversion. Proclus begins with a threefold division of soul:

Every soul is either divine, changes from intellect to ignorance, or is in between these [two states] always intelligizing but being inferior to divine souls.

(*El. theol.* § 184)



These three classes include the gods, the superior classes, and human souls respectively.<sup>25</sup> As we have seen in the case of the World Soul, every soul is an intermediary between the Intelligible and the corporeal.<sup>26</sup> The World Soul rules the body of the entire cosmos, and its thought spans the complete great cycle of time; the lower universal and individual souls rule individual bodies and the smaller period from their descent to their return (§ 200).<sup>27</sup> In this lower class, the visible gods (i.e. the planets) are the highest class, each heading a chain of ever more particular souls. Attendant on them are the superior classes of individual souls (angels, daemons, and heroes), all of whom have ethereal bodies ('vehicles', *ochēmata*). These are always in attendance upon the gods, and thus their intelligizing is free from matter and material influences. Human souls have both an ethereal and a corporeal body, and so their lives and thinking become more intimately involved with nature.<sup>28</sup>

From §§ 186–7 we learn that every soul is incorporeal, indestructible, and imperishable.<sup>29</sup> This includes human souls, which exist in the natural world in a corporeal body and so are more liable to become overwhelmed by the material world, but can still return to commune with the Intelligible.<sup>30</sup>

The soul's double nature leads Proclus to disagree with Iamblichus about its essence. For Iamblichus, the human soul had a double essence in accordance with its dual activities.<sup>31</sup> When the soul was in the Intelligible, its acts were intelligible acts and thus its essence was also intelligible *for that 'time'*. When, however, it descends and mixes with body, both its acts and its essence change and become subject to division and even corruption by its commerce with the physical world. Proclus denies this. Like Universal Soul, 'every participated soul has an eternal essence but an activity in time'.<sup>32</sup> Proclus argues that the soul cannot have an eternal activity and essence, for then it would be Intellect, not soul. It also cannot have an activity and an essence that are in time, for then it would cease to be self-existent (*autozōs*) and self-substantial (*authupostatos*). For Proclus the soul has an eternal essence but its acts occur in time. Thus, the soul does not have the split personality that Iamblichus had required of it. It is in essence an eternal being, but since its acts take place in time it is generated (*El. theol.* § 192). The soul is therefore intermediate between eternity and generation. As a further result of the soul's intermediary position, it participates in Intellect. Like the World Soul, the individual soul holds all the Forms present in the world of Ideas, but appropriately, as an image of what really exists above (*eikonikōs*, § 195). These images are present to it so that it can both decipher and create objects in the natural world.<sup>33</sup>

The soul's contact with the Intelligible occurs through its close relation to its own leader-god.<sup>34</sup> Further, the superior classes in the god's train also assist the human souls on their ascent to the primary god in the chain.

Since each soul of those always following the gods imitates the divine soul and leads a rather large number of individual souls, it draws up very many souls to the primary monad of the whole series. (Procl., *El. theol.* § 204, 178.31–180.2)

The souls in the train take on qualities associated with their leader god, and so, for example, a follower of Mars is by nature warlike.<sup>35</sup> The human soul is both separate from the gods and capable of being rejoined to them through this chain.

The question of the soul's ascent naturally raises the issue of the possibility of the soul's escape from this realm altogether. *El. theol.* § 206 makes clear Proclus' view that no eternal escape is possible. The soul ascends and descends an infinite number of times throughout the course of time. In this, he is again following Iamblichus (*in Phd.* Fr. 5 Dillon). The soul's ascent and descent leads to another problem for Platonists. Our physical bodies are material, made by the younger gods from the four elements (*Tim.* 42e–43a). Such a material body cannot exist among the purity of the ethereal gods. Proclus accepted Iamblichus' doctrine of an immortal ethereal vehicle (*ochêma*) of the soul, with some modifications that derive from Syrianus.<sup>36</sup> For Proclus there are two vehicles: one immortal, ethereal vehicle and one mortal 'pneumatic' vehicle. The higher vehicle is derived from Plato's *Timaeus* 41de, where the Demiurge, having blended human souls with the same three ingredients as the World Soul, only less pure,<sup>37</sup> distributes them among the stars as though into chariot-vehicles (*ἐμβιβάσας ὡς ἐς ὄχημα*; *Tim.* 41e1–2). In § 207, Proclus interprets this passage to mean that the individual soul's vehicle was fashioned by an unmoved cause, i.e. the demiurgic Intellect. In § 208, Proclus argues that this ethereal first body is, therefore, immaterial, indestructible, and impassive in its very essence. Since this vehicle is a permanent affixture to the soul and made from the purest of the elements—ether, the same element that makes up the visible gods' bodies—the soul can ride on it from the edge of the Intelligible realm to the midst of the material world. It is literally the vehicle that allows the soul to move through the cosmos.

Proclus' theory of the vehicles is both detailed and complex. He discusses the vehicle in more depth in his *Timaeus* commentary (III 234.8–238.26). He distinguishes those (like Atticus and Albinus) who say that the vehicle does not survive bodily death (234.9–18), Porphyry who says that the soul collects the vehicle as it descends through the planetary spheres (234.18–32), and Iamblichus who makes the vehicle and irrational soul immortal (234.32–235.9). Proclus agrees with Iamblichus about the vehicle's immortality, arguing that the passage about souls' sojourn in Hades in Plato's *Phaedo* 113d shows that, in order for the soul to be punished there, the vehicle must survive (235.9–236.6). Nonetheless, he is concerned that there is also a mortal aspect to our irrational lives as well. Proclus accounts for this by following Syrianus' 'portmanteau' theory.<sup>38</sup> The Demiurge created the highest aspect of

the vehicle and irrational soul, and therefore it is immortal, but this 'summit' (*akrotês*) is 'extended and divided' by the planetary gods and it is they who fit the mortal aspect of the vehicle to human souls (236.31–237.8). Thus the Demiurge fashions the immortal aspect (ethereal vehicle), and the junior gods the mortal (pneumatic vehicle).<sup>39</sup> The immortal ethereal vehicle engenders the mortal irrational life in the pneumatic vehicle, which in turn brings about the multiple irrational faculties in the body (237.22–31).

In § 209 Proclus confirms that the lower, pneumatic vehicle is accumulated in the soul's descent through the heavens (thus picking up *pneumata* from the planetary gods on its descent); conversely, it is sloughed off in its re-ascent.<sup>40</sup> Thus the process of descent is that of the soul taking on the irrational and sensitive powers, while the ascent is its purification from them. In § 211 Proclus adds that the soul sinks in its entirety, contrary to Plotinus' view, but in line with Iamblichus' teaching (*in Tim.* Fr. 87).<sup>41</sup> Thus the soul as a whole takes on the various ethereal and elemental envelopes and as a whole sinks into the material body. Here it can become lost, forgetful of its origin. The moral struggle, which individual souls will experience in their mortal life, is to dissipate among its passions and fates or assimilate to the One and Intellect by choosing a reverting moral path. Aristotle clearly states that there is an association between circular movement and indestructibility in *De caelo*'s lengthy discussion of imperishability (e.g. Arist., *De caelo* I 2–3). For Aristotle, imperishability has to do with the heavens; for Proclus, it is associated with Soul's contact with Intellect and Intellect's subordination to Being and Eternity. Soul's linear, and hence potentially infinite, discursion is diverted by the attraction to rest by Intellect. The result is a deflection to circular movement. Soul when it is 'lying upon' Intellect is now moving circularly and aligned with its cause.<sup>42</sup> The individual soul, inheriting these dual possibilities, must overcome the turbulence and dissimulative and potential chaos, if it is to align with reason and ultimately become like god (*homoiôsis theôi*). Theurgy grants it the purification necessary for ascent and brings it back into contact with the superior classes and god in its chain.<sup>43</sup>

#### 6.4. CONCLUSION

With Plato's *Timaeus* as a canonical source, Proclus follows earlier Platonists in positing a purer, higher World Soul and lower, less pure, individual souls, including human souls that are closer to matter and so apt to be led astray and lose touch with the realms above them. Following the metaphysical principles of his teacher Syrianus, however, Proclus posits an entirely hypercosmic Monad of Soul and a plurality of hypercosmic souls. All participated souls, each appropriate to their rank, are intermediary between eternity and time,

transcendence and immanence, unity and plurality, and the intelligible and the sensible. For Proclus, the souls' median state between opposites is unproblematic because of his distinction between the soul's essence and its activity.

The World Soul has power over all of generation, and every lesser soul (whether divine, heroic, or individual) has control over its appropriate area in the realm of generation. The paradigms for controlling and organizing this realm come from above, but the World Soul imbues the physical world with this paradigm. For human souls, lowest in the hierarchy of the rational souls, the admixture with matter and the consequent separation from higher hypostases is a tragedy which only spiritual purification can overcome. The individual soul is unique—immortal and capable of intellectual thought. It possesses a deeply rooted similarity to the World Soul as well as to Soul as a hypostasis. As enmeshed in the material world, however, it is capable of sense-perception and is subject to all sorts of irrationality stemming from the passions it endures in its vehicle. It occupies the mean position between the material world and the gods and lives a precarious life in need of divine care. Through intellectual purification and correct moral choice, however, the mortal soul can escape fate and ally with Providence. Theurgy and *theoria*, undertaken in the service of assimilation to higher hypostases, provide potential salvation for the individual human soul. In this way Proclus' philosophy, like Iamblichus' before him, offers hope for an otherwise gloomy existence in the material realm. The individual soul works in tandem with the cosmos as a whole and with the soul's transcendent causes. In this way, the individual soul, a microcosm itself, has a key role to play in the cosmos.

## NOTES

1. On the monads see also Ch. 3 in this volume.
2. *El. theol.* §§ 184–5, 202; in *Tim.* III 259.1–27. For comparable divisions see Opsomer and Steel (2003: n. 131). See Kutash (2011: chs 10, 11) for the many types of souls in the Iamblican/Proclean world, divine and mortal.
3. For the irrational souls, see Ch. 7 in this volume and Opsomer (2006b). For the gods see Ch. 10 in this volume.
4. Proclus discusses the different interpretations in *in Tim.* II 104.16–108.32. See also Klitenic Wear (2009: 177–82) and Baltzly (2009: 60 n. 8) and esp. (2009: 37–41), where Baltzly presents a more nuanced view.
5. Unless otherwise stated (as here), translations are our own.
6. On the relation between the World Soul and monadic Soul, see Baltzly (2009: 37–42).
7. For Plotinus' views of the World Soul see esp. *Enn.* III 8 [30] 1–7. In contradistinction to Plotinus, Proclus does not identify the activity of Soul with Nature. Another difference is that for Proclus the higher causes have a more extended

creative power, so the non-animate parts or elements of the cosmos (matter, bodies) are as such not produced by Soul. See also Ch. 7 in this volume. On the relation between the World Soul and mathematics see later in this chapter.

8. See *in Tim.* III 335.17–23, where Soul moves everything through the principle Life, but is also connected with Intellect. This passage concerns lower souls, but is nonetheless true for all souls, including the World Soul. Cf. *El. theol.* § 102: ‘All that lives is capable of self-motion because of primary Life; all that knows has a share of knowledge because of the primary Intellect’ (92.2–4 Dodds).
9. See Arist., *De an.* I 3 with *Phys.* VII 1.
10. On spiritual motion, see the work of Gersh (1973).
11. On the many types of souls in the Iamblichean and Proclean world see above and n. 2.
12. For this notion, see also Ch. 8.
13. Iamblichus elevated Time from the level of Soul to the level of Intellect and elevated Eternity to a level above the Intellect. For Proclus, as for Iamblichus, time is not generated with Soul or with the motion of the heavens (*Tim.* 38b6). Souls partake of Time as Time has a place as ‘unanticipated’ (real and undivided). Soul can access Time as a Monad which provides the ‘syntax’, as Peter Manchester explains, that communicates order to ‘interval’ (the discrete moments of the temporal flow) (Manchester 2005: 66). Time, as opposed to temporality (its moving image) and Eternity are elevated above the Soul imbuing the life of the Soul with a moving continuity that is subordinate to Time as a hypostasis. Soul as subordinate to Monadic Time allows it to partake of Intellect and Intellect’s changeless structures and apply them within temporal progressions. Time as ‘unparticipated’ is manifest e.g. in the Great Year where all temporal events commensurate with Time as a Whole (*in Tim.* III 3.1 ff., Baltzly (2013: 13–14), *El. theol.* § 53). Soul, in short, is subordinate to Time as a Monad, which in turn is subordinate to Eternity and this renders creation, as a whole, an image of the Original Paradigm. See further Kutash (2009).
14. This is a term, which is consistently used by Proclus for transcendence, stemming from the verb *ἐξαιρεῖν*. This term, used for the One and other transcendent hypostases, goes beyond Plato’s *ἐπέκεινα τῆς οὐσίας* (beyond being). It is suggestive of a radical and supercosmic removal. It is best translated as ‘exempt’.
15. In this quote, Proclus states that the soul connects or provides continuity (*συνεχῆ*) to the world. The Pythagorean ‘hearth’ and tower of Zeus or guardian post of Zeus is a common notion in Neopythagorean and Pythagorean literature. It is found in Fr. 7 of Philolaus where he refers to a hearth in the centre of the sphere of the cosmos. See Huffman (1993: 395): ‘Philolaus (says) that there is fire in the middle around the centre which he calls the hearth of the whole and the house of Zeus and mother of gods, altar, continuity and measure of nature (*συνεχῆ καὶ μέτρον φύσεως*)’.
16. Steel (1978: 15).
17. The cosmos is a sphere, penetrated and surrounded by Soul. See Griffin (2006) who points this out, using Simplicius’ report of Proclus’ passage on this subject. Proclus adds that the world is surrounded and penetrated by place acting as intermediary to Soul. This ‘place’ can also be conceived as ‘light’ (Simplicius, *in Phys.* 612.29–34).

18. In general, 'touching' is one way to translate ἀπτόμενα, but its exact interpretation as such is complicated. Touching can mean superimposition, edge to edge touching, connecting, etc. It is interesting to look at the term in Euclid's *Elements*, where it can mean to touch (*El.* IV Def. 5) or to meet (*El.* III Def. 2) or even to lie on (in the case of geometrical figures, e.g. *El.* I Def. 3).
19. Nikulin (2003: 189); Kutash (2003: 214).
20. On the musical theories of Philolaus and Archytas see Barker (1994).
21. *In Tim.* II 158 with Baltzly (2009: 27–31).
22. For the relation between mathematics and the human soul see Ch. 8 in this volume.
23. On this theory see Proclus' remark at *in Tim.* II 165.8–9 and Baltzly (2009b: 134 n. 206). Baltzly refers to Xenocrates Fr.189 (Isnardi Parente) and Fr. 188 = Plutarch, *De an. proc.* 1012a. Proclus does not mention Speusippus in this context. He does mention the view that the World Soul's essence is geometrical extension, but ascribes it to Severus (*in Tim.* II 152.24–32). See also later in this chapter.
24. Cf. *El. theol.* § 194: 'Every soul possesses all the Forms that the intellect possesses primarily' (cf. *in Parm.* IV 897.17–39). Steel (1997a: 297) explains: 'The divine souls are characterized as engaged in a permanent activity of thought without any interruption, ἀεὶ νοοῦσι ... [O]ur particular souls ... must be stimulated from the outside, awakened by sense-perception before they can "project" their innate reasons.'
25. See *El. theol.* § 185, where Proclus calls this second class θεῶν ὁπαδοὶ ἀεὶ, the term used in Plato's *Phaedrus* and subsequently used by Iamblichus and later Neoplatonists to refer to the superior classes (angels, daemons, heroes). Cf. *El. theol.* § 202. For differences between Proclus' view of these sorts of soul and Iamblichus', see Finamore (2010).
26. See *El. theol.* § 190. As Dodds (1963: 297) points out, this is based on Plato *Tim.* 35a1–4. Proclus also differentiates each of the superior classes by the amount of Being, Sameness, or Difference in each. Gods have an excess of Being; daemons of Sameness; human beings of Difference (*in Tim.* II 158.9–12).
27. See the note in Dodds (1963: 301–3).
28. For Proclus' elaborations on this doctrine, see Chlup (2012: 128). Chlup (2012: 128 n. 30) adds: 'The situation is further complicated by the fact that in Plato's *Timaeus* (42d) the Demiurge sows souls into the planets, and Proclus needs to postulate another set of encosmic planetary patrons of human souls.'
29. See Dodds (1963: 296): 'ἀνώλεθρός ἐστι καὶ ἄφθαρτος. The first term refers to annihilation by severance from the substrate, the second to dissolution into elements.'
30. On the superior classes, see Rosán (1949: 175–6); Siorvanes (1996: 127–9); Chlup (2012: 128). For Proclus' distinction between the World Soul and lower souls in the *Timaeus* commentary, see Klitenic Wear (2009: 188–93).
31. See *in De an.* 89.33–90.25, and the notes of Finamore and Dillon (2002: 254–6).
32. On the distinction between essence and activity in the soul, see Steel (1997a: 296–7; 1978: 70–3). See also section 6.1 of this chapter.
33. The soul has an innate conception of the forms through the reason-principles (λόγοι) that are housed in the soul. These *logoi* are a corollary of the Platonic

theory of *anamnesis* (memory of the Forms), as set out in *Phaedo* and *Meno* and illustrated in *Phaedrus* and other dialogues. The human soul brings forth (*προβάλλει*) these *logoi* from within itself and thus ‘remembers’ the Forms that gave birth to the *logoi*. For a good discussion of these *logoi*, see Helmig (2012: 264–72), cf. Chlup (2012: 144–7), Steel (1997a: 295–6).

34. Following the *Phaedrus* myth, all souls follow their leader gods, but human souls do so with more difficulty. Some may forget their leaders, but nonetheless—as Chlup (2012: 128) writes—each still ‘imitates its god unconsciously’.
35. See in *Tim.* III 279.11–30 and (more fully) in *Tim.* III 162.1–166.29.
36. For Iamblichus and the history of the vehicle, see Finamore (1985).
37. *Tim.* 41d6–7. Plato never explained how the ingredients could be less pure since they are already of an intermediate nature between Intelligible and material Being, Sameness, and Difference, but Platonists were committed to the view that human souls ranked below divine or daemonic souls. Proclus, in *Tim.* III 245.19–246.29, uses the passage to argue for his (and Iamblichus’) belief that Plotinus did not properly differentiate ranks of souls.
38. The term is Dillon’s (1973: 374), in his commentary to Iamblichus Fr. 81 and this long section in which the fragment rests.
39. On demiurgy (including the demiurgy of the young gods), see Ch. 7 in this volume.
40. Dodds (1963: 307) states that the pneumatic vehicle ‘consists of successive layers of the four elements’. This is misleading. The vehicle is made from the ethereal envelopes of the planetary bodies (which are, of course ethereal, not material). Dodds cites in *Tim.* III 297–8, but the passage does not support his claim. There Proclus is discussing the soul’s cleansing through the purificatory virtues (*καθαρτική ἀρετή*, 297.16). Purificatory virtues are those that remove material stains from the vehicle; the higher virtues deal with spiritual cleansing and ascent. Thus, Proclus says that the descending soul collects ‘from the elements’ (*ἀπὸ τῶν στοιχείων*, 297.22) airy, watery, earthy envelopes (*ἀερίους, ἐνυδρίους, χθονίους*, 297.22–3). These are collected below the Moon, in the band of elements between the Moon and the Earth. The pneumatic envelopes come from the ethereal planetary bodies. Thus, these elemental envelopes are the denser wrappings that will become the soul’s material body and irrational powers (297.26–298.2).
41. See Dillon (1973: 382–3), Dodds (1963: 309–10), and Steel (1978: 21–73).
42. See *Laws* (X 897d) and *Timaeus* (37a–c6). Plato describes the soul and the Circle of the Same this way: ‘Whenever . . . the account concerns any object of reasoning, and the circle of the Same runs well and reveals it, the necessary result is understanding and knowledge’ (*Tim.* 37c; tr. Zeyl). In other sections of the *Timaeus* the soul is described as subject to irregular motion, influenced by the body, and thus connected with the irrational. The soul when it reverts to Intellect is said to move in a circle. It is interesting to note that Anaxagoras, who is an influential predecessor of Plato (Kutash 1993: 134–52), in Fr. B12 says that ‘Intellect controls all things’ (*πάντων νοῦς κρατεῖ*) and the ‘whole rotation’ (*περιχωρήσιος*).
43. For theurgy, the ritual sacrament that leads the soul out of the corporeal body and raises it to the realms above, see Ch. 11 in this volume.

## The Natural World

*Jan Opsomer*

### 7.1. THE *TIMAEUS*: PLATO'S TEACHINGS ABOUT NATURE, ITS CREATION AND ITS DIVINE CAUSES

Any Platonist wanting to learn more about Plato's account of nature must first turn to the *Timaeus*, as did Proclus. His commentary on this dialogue comes at the end of a long exegetical tradition and is a precious source for earlier interpretations of it. First and foremost, it tells us a great deal about Proclus' own philosophy of nature. What we get, however, is not exactly what one might expect when one hears the expression 'philosophy of nature'. As Proclus explains in the first lines of his commentary,<sup>1</sup> the dialogue embraces the whole study of nature (*phusiologia*), which involves the study of the universe, its principles as well as its goal (*in Tim.* I 1.4–6). The *Timaeus*, though, is not exactly an *inquiry* into nature, but a *teaching* related to nature. Likewise, it is written by an author who knows what there is to know about the subject to the extent that knowledge of nature is possible. Plato, then, acts as our teacher and in the *Timaeus*, he supposedly teaches us with a particular didactic method in mind. Specifically, he writes in the manner of the Pythagoreans. The physical account of the *Timaeus* is indeed steeped in the Pythagorean tradition. Plato presents the dialogue as a speech by a guest from Locri, named Timaeus. In the later tradition, someone pretending to be Timaeus forged a work entitled *On the Nature of the World and the Soul*, which Proclus believes was the original source for Plato's *Timaeus* (*in Tim.* I 1.8–16; 25–6). According to Proclus, the *Timaeus* does not just teach us about the world. Rather, it primarily teaches us about the gods, who are the causes of our world. It does so using the didactic method developed by the Pythagoreans, the so-called 'iconic mode of teaching'.<sup>2</sup> The general idea is that, since the world stems from higher causes and the product always contains something of its cause within it (see *El. theol.* § 23; §§ 29–32), the relations between natural beings mirror the relations between their causes, insofar that nature and natural things are images (*eikones*) of



higher realities. Hence, by looking at the way in which natural beings are ordered, we can discover something about the hierarchical order of their transcendent causes through the principle of analogy (a:b::c:d). Accordingly, Plato as a teacher explains the relation between the efficient and paradigmatic causes of natural beings—the divinities involved in the creation of the world—by speaking of the relation between natural beings (*Theol. plat.* I 4, 19.6–22; 20.8–12). This method is allegedly implied when Plato says that the world is an image and resembles its paradigm (*in Tim.* I 334.30–335.12). The use of analogical reasoning agrees with the Neoplatonic principle that everything is contained in everything in conformity with the rank of the container:<sup>3</sup> thus the causes of the world are detectable in the world itself.

An example, somewhat simplified here, shows what Proclus means a bit more clearly. In *Tim.* 37c6–d7, Plato describes time as a ‘moving image of eternity’, created so as to enhance the similarity of the world with its paradigm, which is an eternal living being. While eternity remains established in ‘one’ (μένοντος αἰῶνος ἐν ἐνί), time moves according to number. According to Proclus, this passage reveals a ‘double triad’. First, it tells us about a hierarchical sequence, namely, world-time-number. Nevertheless, this reflects a higher order triad, namely, Living-Being/Life/One-Being. This triad is the third intelligible triad (see Appendix I), given here in ascending order. Its lowest member is indeed the ‘Intelligible Living Being’ that serves as the paradigm for the creation of the world.<sup>4</sup> The motion of time is an image of eternity’s rest—the rest of Being—and the number that measures it is an image of the ‘one’ that measures eternity (*Theol. plat.* III 17–18; *in Tim.* III 14.16–15.8).<sup>5</sup> The upshot of this passage is that the study of the structures of our world reveals the intelligible structures that they mirror: we observe the natural world and see objects and living creatures in motion, all subject to time, which is itself subjected to number. From this observation we can infer that the eternal Intelligible Living Being participates in Eternity, also understood as Life, which in turn participates in the unity of Being.

This is the kind of analogical, iconic structure that Proclus has in mind when he says in the introduction to the *Timaeus* commentary that Plato discerns the same things (structures) in paradigms and images, in wholes and parts (I 1.18–22). Indeed, structural similarities do not just characterize the relation between the world and its model, but also various relations between parts of the world and the world as a whole. The relation between

Table 7.1

Paradigm (3rd intelligible triad)	Image
One Being	Number
Life (Eternity)	Time
The Intelligible Living-Being	World

our soul and body, for instance, is mirrored at the level of the universe, where the world soul governs the world body, and the structure of our souls and their powers are to some extent paralleled in the world soul.

Plato's account of nature is characterized repeatedly throughout his narration as 'likely' or 'resembling' (*eikos*).<sup>6</sup> For Proclus this has a double meaning: it explains that we can discover something about the realities transcending nature by describing nature, as we have already seen, in addition to saying something about the study of nature itself.<sup>7</sup> As an image, nature is characterized by a fair amount of indeterminacy and lacks the perfection of its causes. So we should not expect to be able to give an account of nature's transcendent causes that is exact and certain. Our explanations of nature are fallible and lack the precision of, for instance, mathematics.<sup>8</sup> Hence, the study of nature cannot claim to be a 'science' (*epistêmê*) in the strictest sense. At the same time, the 'resembling' character that Timaeus claims in his account imposes certain constraints on our study of nature. It suggests that we should try to make our account as likely as is feasible, or as he says: not less likely than rivalling accounts and if possible more likely than them (*Tim.* 48c2–e1).

Proclus claims that the study of nature has a *hypothetical* character, which he links to the method of the geometers. This hypothetical method is evidenced by the beginning of the physical account in the *Timaeus*, where, so Proclus argues, Plato first posits certain starting points in the form of definitions, hypotheses, axioms, and common notions.<sup>9</sup> These starting points, which involve existential claims about certain entities (for instance, the existence of things that are 'becoming', that is, in motion<sup>10</sup>), are undemonstrated. Proclus does not, however, confuse definitions and hypotheses (Martijn 2010a: 93–7). Unlike Aristotle, Proclus regards both as propositions and considers the definitions as they are used in the study of nature to be a sub-class of hypotheses, insofar that they contain hypotheses about the existence of the things defined. The cognitive faculty corresponding to this method, which starts from hypothetical starting points and does not ascend to an unhypothetical principle, is opinion (*doxai*), which makes use of sense-perception and discursive reasoning.<sup>11</sup> The fact that the starting points are not demonstrated within the study of nature does not mean that they are undemonstrated in an absolute sense; quite to the contrary. In the *Timaeus* Plato even offers a proof for the existence of Being. This is because the *Timaeus* is much more than just a study of nature. It also gives an account of the transcendent principles of the natural world (*in Tim.* I 204.3–15; 236.28–237.8).

According to Proclus, Plato's account of nature is superior to that of any other writer because he alone discusses all true causes of the world and its parts in a clear and accurate way and shows that these causes are themselves images of higher causal principles (I 1.22–4). The Platonic study of nature traditionally consists of three parts: (1) the study of matter, i.e. of the material cause, (2) the study of the formal cause, and (3) the study of true causes, i.e. the

productive, the paradigmatic, and the final cause. The scholar who proceeds to the latter three indeed understands that matter and form are merely auxiliary causes (I 2.1–3.22; cf. *in Parm.* IV 888.15–24). For Proclus, this Platonic doctrine of causes is superior to the Aristotelian fourfold classification. It is the most important reason for preferring Plato's natural philosophy to Aristotle's.<sup>12</sup> Of Aristotle's four causes, matter and form are demoted by Proclus to the status of auxiliary causes (*sunaitia*). What Aristotle calls 'form' in the *Physics* is in fact merely enmattered form (*to enhulon eidos*), an immanent constituent of hylomorphic compounds (I 2.17–19; 3.1–2; see section 7.4.3). So too, Proclus reinterprets the nature of the efficient cause in a Platonic fashion: from being the mere cause of motion, it has become a productive cause (*poiètikon*). Even if one were to consider Aristotle's 'nature' or the 'unmoved mover' as efficient causes, they would still fall short of being a truly productive cause, a role fulfilled by Plato's divine craftsman (I 2.20–9). This true productive cause is, of course, necessary as the world is incapable of producing itself or even preserving its own existence. Therefore, the productive cause is also that which holds the world together (I 3.8–10).<sup>13</sup> A further merit of Plato's, though, consists in his having added the paradigmatic cause to the list.<sup>14</sup> The paradigms of the world and its parts are forms too, but not enmattered forms. Unlike those recognized by Aristotle, Plato's Forms are transcendent. Lastly, the final cause is seen in light of Neoplatonic metaphysics, as the origin to which all beings strive to revert, which is the One or the Good. Although Proclus considers Plato's account of nature to be far superior to Aristotle's, he does not simply dismiss the latter. Instead, he integrates Aristotle's position to the extent that it is compatible with Plato's. In a short work titled *Elements of Physics*, for instance, Proclus rehashes Aristotle's arguments from *Physics* VI, *De caelo*, and *Physics* VIII, by presenting them in a systematic form. In the style of the geometers, Proclus starts by giving definitions and then builds up a protracted argument consisting of propositions and proofs (he uses the same argumentative style, yet somewhat more loosely, in the *Elements of Theology*). His conclusion in this short work is that there must be an indivisible cause of motion that cannot itself be moved, since divisibility is a necessary condition for being moved. In other words, motion requires the causal efficiency of an unmoved mover. Elsewhere, as we have seen, Proclus explains that this cause needs to be more than just a cause of motion. It needs to be a productive cause, which brings us to the issue of the divine craftsman.

## 7.2. DEMIURGY

The world is created by a divine craftsman, the demiurge. In order to create, he contemplates an intelligible paradigm. Of the many other transcendent

realities that Proclus recognizes (see Chapters 4–6 in this volume) the demiurge and the paradigm will have to be examined more closely in this chapter. First, however, we should address the question as to whether ‘creation’ (demiurgy) is to be taken as an event or a series of events belonging to the past.

### 7.2.1. Is the Current Age of the World Finite?

Contrary to what a literal reading of the *Timaeus* might suggest and contrary to what an increasing number of people in Proclus’ day—the followers of the new state religion—came to believe, Proclus did not regard the creation of the world as a single event at the beginning of time, nor did he think that Plato’s *Timaeus* is to be understood this way. The first generation of Platonists had already resorted to a non-literal interpretation of the *Timaeus* in order to counter Aristotle’s objections to Plato.<sup>15</sup> They were impressed by Aristotle’s arguments against the idea of a temporal beginning of the world or the related idea of a beginning of time. They explained, though, that Plato did not want to defend these ideas either, but only presented his cosmology as a linear narrative in order to elucidate the structural, sempiternal features of the world.<sup>16</sup> The demiurge wants to make a world, reflects on what is to be done, establishes a beginning, creates the beginning first, and then creates this and that, and so on. By telling this story, it becomes easier to distinguish between different structural ‘moments’: the demiurge, the paradigm, the world soul, the body of the world, the astral and ancestral gods, the receptacle, the elements, the parts of animals, etc. Thus the narrative form simply fulfils a didactic function. The majority of ancient Platonists, especially toward the end of antiquity, took the same view, and Proclus is no exception.<sup>17</sup> Proclus emphatically defends what is often misleadingly called the ‘eternity of the world’. One should avoid the term ‘eternity’ when speaking about the world, since the universe undisputedly exists in time and encompasses change. This makes it different from eternity properly speaking, which is unchanging and presential (hence the world is called *aidios*, ‘everlasting’, not *aiônios*). Proclus defended his view that the world has neither beginning nor end in a separate work containing eighteen different arguments. Fragments of this work are preserved in Philoponus’ attempted refutation of Proclus, *De aeternitate mundi contra Proclum*.<sup>18</sup> According to these fragments, if the world has no temporal beginning, but exists in time, while the demiurgical realm is outside of time, demiurgy is a name for the transition between two very different realms. The limit between the two realms is supposed to be punctual and unextended on the side of the demiurge, but uniformly stretched throughout the infinity of time on our side (perhaps one should rather use the expression ‘unboundedness’ of time: since not all of time is present at once, its lack of limit at both of its sides is not considered to constitute a vicious, unacceptable

form of infinity). Accordingly, the term ‘becoming’ applied to the world does not designate a transition in time from non-existence to existence, but rather the continual change to which it is subjected.

### 7.2.2. Demiurges and Other Productive Causes

Although the demiurge is the deity, causally productive of the world, it is not the only productive cause of the world—there are several demiurgic principles—nor is everything that is causally productive of the world a demiurge. Otherwise, the One or the Good, which is the cause of all of reality,<sup>19</sup> would be a demiurge—but it is not. Proclus actually holds the view that there are quite a few productive causes in the transcendent realm, but he restricts the term ‘demiurgic’ to those causes that produce things that can be characterized as becoming, *insofar as* they are such (*in Tim.* I 260.19–26). Hence the Good is the cause of being (cf. *Resp.* VI 509b6–10), also for the material world, but not its demiurgic cause. For it does not produce the world *qua* becoming. The same is true for the highest intelligible and the intelligible-intellective deities. They play a causal role, but not a demiurgic one.

In the prooemium of the physical account of the *Timaeus*, Plato jumps from the notion of a cause for the world of becoming, to the figure of the demiurge without any further introduction. It is as if Plato sees it as obvious that the required cause can only be a divine craftsman. He begins by establishing the fundamental distinction between Being and Becoming (27d2–28a4). Then he expresses the crucial principle that ‘everything which comes to be necessarily comes to be by some cause’ (28a4–5).<sup>20</sup> This immediately leads to a reflection about the craftsman and the paradigm that he uses (28a6–7). After short, but dense reflections on the nature of the unchanging and intelligible paradigm and the world that ‘has come to be’ (*gegonen*) and accordingly has an ‘origin’ or ‘principle’ (*archê*) of its becoming, Timaeus recalls the principle that everything that comes to be does so by a cause (28c2–3). He then asserts the difficulty of discovering and explaining ‘the maker and father of the All’, obviously understood as being the aforementioned cause. This whole prooemium is the object of an extensive discussion in the *Timaeus* commentary, where Proclus explains the theory of demiurgy, the role of the paradigmatic and efficient cause, and the notion of becoming.<sup>21</sup>

Demiurgy is a very complex process, steered by a plurality of demiurges. If one speaks of *the* demiurge, though, this refers to the first or ‘universal’ demiurge. It is he whom Plato calls the ‘maker and father’ of the universe in the *Timaeus*.<sup>22</sup> Proclus identifies him with Zeus and through a complicated argument establishes his theological rank as the third deity of the first intellectual triad (*in Tim.* I 311.1–20).<sup>23</sup> His role consists of transmitting to the world the powers that are superior to him. The position of the universal

demiurge marks the point where the powers of the intelligible and intelligible-intellective principles become operative in the world. He leads the process of demiurgy precisely because he initiates the entire process; i.e. he produces the world as a whole. Since he is the universal demiurge, he only produces 'wholes'. Beings whose natures do not pertain to the whole universe, i.e. that are *parts* of the world, are produced by demiurgic powers inferior to the universal demiurge.<sup>24</sup> The prior creation of wholes is possible only because of the non-temporal character of the higher forms of demiurgy. In other words, only if priority is non-temporal can the whole be prior to its constituent parts (cf. Baltzly 2007: 5). The priority is essential: this kind of whole, a whole-before-the-parts,<sup>25</sup> is, for its own being, independent of the parts, whereas the latter are essentially dependent upon the whole.<sup>26</sup> While the universal demiurge produces in an unmoved and non-temporal fashion, the reality produced by him is always in motion. As I have said before, he stands for the transition between ontological realms and is the unique productive cause of the world of becoming insofar as it is a world of change.

If the universe is to form a unity, all efficient demiurgic causality must originate from one single cause (and similarly for the paradigmatic cause).<sup>27</sup> That is why there is only one demiurge supervising all demiurgic activity, despite there being a multitude of demiurgic causes. The fact that the demiurge is an intellect is also significant. Not only does Proclus find exegetical evidence for this, he also sees a more systemic reason: the demiurge contemplates an intelligible paradigm. That which contemplates the intelligible is itself an intellect and, in conformity with his metaphysics, ontologically inferior to it. Unlike a soul, an intellect thinks in a timeless and unchanging way, as does Aristotle's unmoved mover. So despite the fact that the *Timaeus* suggests that the demiurge is engaged in discursive thought, deliberates and plans creation, and then proceeds to create one thing after another, this is not how Proclus thinks that he operates. Proclus denies that the demiurge reasons discursively (*kata metabasin*).<sup>28</sup> Moreover, the demiurge creates by his very being. That is, he creates without 'doing' anything besides engaging in the activity in which any intellect engages uninterruptedly: thinking (*in Parm.* IV 843.24–844.2). The generation of the world is accomplished, then, by the very fact that the demiurgic intellect exists and thinks its unchanging thoughts, which it receives from the intelligible paradigm.<sup>29</sup>

The transition between a realm that is completely characterized by immobility, indivisibility, and unextendedness to an extended, divisible sublunary world in permanent motion is supposed to be softened by the insertion of supplementary ontological and causal levels between the demiurge and the bodily world (*in Tim.* I 370.11–13). The main problem is that any cause can only bestow on its products what is already contained in its own nature. How then can we get motion and division from something that is motionless and indivisible? The envisaged solution is based upon the idea that, at each step,

divisibility and mobility increase, or rather, that ever more aspects of the beings concerned can be regarded as divisible or changeable. For instance, above the level of bodies, there are the individual souls, who descend in their entirety, but are unalterable in the core of their being. It is characteristic for souls that they have the capacity to leave their own order and to travel back and forth between the transcendent realm and the world (*De mal.* § 20). But even among souls, there are differences. What they all have in common is that they descend without being affected in their very being. Some suffer in both their powers and activities, while others only in their activities (the triad *ousia-dunamis-energeia*). Also, the extent of the affection at these levels may be different, which leads to complex classifications of souls.<sup>30</sup> Yet even souls are not in direct contact with matter and bodies. In between, there are the irrational forces (the irrational souls or soul parts), the 'reason principles' (*logoi*) and the enmattered forms (*enhula eidê*, see later in this chapter). It is questionable whether the multiplication of levels solves the problem of explaining the transitions. If there are more intermediary ontological levels, the differences between them are smaller; that is, they pertain to fewer aspects. Yet, no matter how small the differences become, the transitions remain fundamentally obscure. Each difference, however small, introduces something new, and it is not clear what accounts for that. We have just taken a look at the levels that are relatively close to the material world, but higher up, there is an equally dazzling complexity of levels.<sup>31</sup>

Despite its formidable complexity, demiurgy is basically twofold.<sup>32</sup> The most fundamental distinction is that between universal and partial (or 'divided') demiurgy, presided over by Zeus and Dionysus, respectively. Zeus, 'the' demiurge of the *Timaeus*, is the universal demiurgic monad and is assisted by a triad of demiurges. This triad consists of Zeus<sub>2</sub> (a namesake of the demiurge, belonging to the same divine 'chain'), Poseidon, and Pluto, and is drawn from the *Gorgias* myth (523a3–5). Proclus locates them in his theological hierarchy as the first hypercosmic triad (cf. *Theol. plat.* VI 6, 29.6–23). Partial (*merikê*) demiurgy is organized in like fashion, namely, a monad is followed by a demiurgic triad. The precise ranking of these deities is impossible to establish, but it is certain that they are active in the cosmos; they are encosmic gods. Dionysus himself, however, is essentially a hypercosmic god, though active in the world. His role as leader of the partial demiurges has to do with an Orphic myth, according to which the god leaves his throne in order to celebrate with the Bacchae, but the Bacchae turn out to be disguised Titans who then tear the god to pieces. His heart, however, was saved by Athens and became the intellect of the world, i.e. the demiurge *in* the world. His divided body symbolizes the world soul with its sevenfold division (corresponding to the planets). (See Table 7.2 for a schema.)

The first demiurge is said to create universal beings in a universal way and the triad over which he presides creates partial beings in a universal way.<sup>33</sup>

Table 7.2

1.	<b>First, or universal, demiurgy</b>	
1.1.	<i>of universal beings in a universal fashion</i>	the monad of demiurgy: Zeus, 'maker and father', (third member of the first intellectual triad)
1.2.	<i>of partial beings in a universal fashion</i>	first hypercosmic triad: Zeus <sub>2</sub> , Poseidon, Pluto/Hades
2.	<b>Second, or partial, demiurgy</b>	
2.1.	<i>of universal beings in a partial fashion</i>	the monad of Dionysus
2.2.	<i>of partial beings in a partial fashion</i>	Dionysian triad, young gods
(3.)	<b>Third demiurgy</b> (possibly subsumable under 2.)	Adonis

Dionysus—no longer a 'maker and father', but just a 'maker'—creates universal beings in a partial way and the triad that depends upon him creates partial beings in a partial way. The basic distinction, then, is between two different *modes* of creating: universal and partial. It is relatively easy to understand what the universal demiurge does. He creates the world as a whole as well as the universal beings that constitute it (the fact that the world is a 'whole of wholes' constitutes the third demiurgic 'gift'),<sup>34</sup> more specifically, the world body and the world soul (the next section contains a more extensive list of creations). The subordinate triad of universal demiurgy creates the parts in a universal way. The names of the gods strongly suggest that these correspond to different parts of the universe: the celestial, aquatic, and chthonic regions (*Theol. plat.* VI 8, 35.23–4). The three of them divide the world up amongst them: the first concerns himself with the stars, the second with the planets, the third with the sublunary realm (*Theol. plat.* VI 10, 46.8–14). They create the *universal* parts. In the sublunary realm, the special province of the third member of the triad, all three gods collaborate with the encosmic gods and divide the sublunary 'parts as wholes' (*tas holas meridas*) among themselves. These 'parts as wholes' are the sublunary lots (*klêroi*), i.e. unchanging entities such as the material receptacle, the ethereal vehicles of divine bodies, the totalities of the four elements (*in Tim.* I 137.29–139.17). Moreover, they symbolize existence, life, and intellectual reversion.<sup>35</sup> In the creation of living beings, they all collaborate, each contributing an essential aspect: the first of these gods produces beings (*ousias*), the second lives, and the third the divisions of the species. One may conclude that, even when this triad occupies itself with parts, it always does so in a universal mode.



There is no list of what the 'partial' demiurges do exactly. However, these demiurges are probably the young gods whose task is explained in the *Timaeus* (41a7–42e4). In a famous speech, the demiurge delegates a part of the work to these gods that he first created. Their contribution is necessary, as the demiurge himself is incapable of creating anything that is not immortal. The young gods are themselves immortal, but their immortality is inferior because it is derivative from that of the demiurge and dependent upon him. That should explain why they are capable of producing beings that are mortal and this is precisely what they do. After the demiurge has created the rational, immortal part of the individual souls, the young gods weave together the so-called mortal soul parts and join them to the rational soul. They are also responsible for the creation of bodies.

Sometimes, Proclus even mentions a third level of demiurgy, the demiurgy of Adonis (*in Tim.* I 446.5–13). There are some indications that demiurgy at this level is concerned with the regeneration of things that wither away and die. Where Proclus applies the more usual twofold distinction, he probably takes it to belong to the realm of partial demiurgy.<sup>36</sup> As if this complexity is not yet enough, Proclus adds that there are other demiurgic triads, subordinate to the main demiurgic triads, and other demiurgic causes, namely angels and demons, who act as helpers of the demiurgic gods at the level of secondary demiurgy (*in Tim.* I 137.7–26; 370.24–6). Also, Soul (universal or particular) or Nature (universal or particular) can be considered as demiurgic causes, transmitting the powers that they receive from the demiurge(s) to the bodily world.

### 7.2.3. The Products of Demiurgy

The universal demiurge creates universal immortal beings. He makes the world as such. The created world is a happy immortal god (*Tim.* 34b8–9) that possesses immortality not so much out of itself, but rather as a feature constantly bestowed upon it by the demiurge. He creates the soul of the world and its divisions, as well as time and its instruments. Furthermore, the demiurge shapes the body of the world, structuring it according to the four elements that he also creates (through the demiurgic triad associated with him, as we have already seen).<sup>37</sup> Although the corpuscles that make up the elements are destructible, the totality of each element is everlasting. The universal demiurge indeed creates the elements as totalities.<sup>38</sup> He does so by laying down general structural principles, i.e. the geometric forms according to which they are built. Also, celestial and sublunary gods are created as part of the first demiurgy. The demiurge further creates the species of animals. Because of the immortality of all species, one may surmise that the gradual division of the first four classes into species, down to the level of the *infima species*, belongs to

the domain of the first demiurgy. Finally, the demiurge creates rational souls, of humans as well as superior kinds, and the imperishable ethereal vehicle of the soul.<sup>39</sup> Actually, since the universal demiurge only creates wholes, the individuality of each soul will presumably come about only at a later stage.

The second, 'Dionysian', demiurgy is concerned with individual mortal beings, such as irrational souls and their pneumatic vehicle (Opsomer 2006b: 148–9) as well as mortal bodies (i.e. the third, earthy vehicle) and their parts. The second demiurgy takes place in time,<sup>40</sup> starting with the less perfect (simple bodies) and proceeding towards the more perfect. In temporal production, e.g. ordinary processes of generation, the part precedes the whole. Put another way, the simple precedes the complex.<sup>41</sup> At this level, parts are created first, and *then* put together. This is different from the timeless production of the first demiurgy, where the wholes are conceived first, and the parts whose seeds are contained in the wholes are developed from within the latter. Proclus' account of the second demiurgy, however, is not preserved, as the commentary breaks off exactly at this point.

Individual mortal living beings are produced only at the level of inner-worldly demiurgy. As the rational soul descends, young gods provide mortal parts and vehicles for these mortal parts, using the 'sources of irrational life' available to them (cf. Opsomer 2006b). Again, two different perspectives are supposed to be compatible: the rational soul, which contains the causes of irrational life within itself, somehow gives rise to these irrational powers; on the other hand, they are produced by encosmic demiurges and acquired by the rational soul in its descent. Thus, the irrational powers are characterized by a double generation (*in Tim.* III 284.21–7). This is an example of the interplay between an aptitude in the substrate that meets the formal principle from above at the right moment. Finally, our earthy bodies, composed of a variety of parts that first needed to be fabricated, are added, and only when all of this is put together do we get a human individual. It is only with individual animals that genuine mortality occurs. Insofar as they are mortal, individual animals are produced by the young gods. That which has been created by an immobile cause, yet through the intermediary of a moved cause, is in one respect ungenerated and immortal and in another respect generated and mortal (*in Tim.* III 224.4–6; 225.7–9, 12–13). Mortal beings receive their unity, being, and form from the first demiurgy, while their plurality, individuality, and their being generated and being subject to becoming come from the second demiurgy (*in Tim.* III 225.9–11). Thus, the contribution of the encosmic demiurges is essential. They are needed to rejuvenate and regenerate creation, more specifically for those parts that are subject to change and corruption (this may be the specific contribution of Adonis and his helpers; *in Tim.* III 241.30–242.3).

The life that characterizes living beings originates in Rheia. In the Intelligible Living Being, there is no distinction yet between male and female, but

after it the procession of living beings is double, consisting of male and female, demiurgic and life-giving principles (*Theol. plat.* III 15, 54.14–16). The former is located in the third, while the latter is located in the second position of each triad. Female and male aspects belong to different causal chains, but both chains come together in the figure of the demiurge (*in Tim.* III 247.26–249.26). He produces the soul together with life-giving Rheia, by mixing the soul in the mixing bowl (*Tim.* 41d4, identified with Hera). Rheia contains the causes of all forms of life within her, more particularly, the irrational vegetative and appetitive powers and also Nature (*in Tim.* I 11.22–3).<sup>42</sup>

If one considers the twofold demiurgy from the perspective of the things produced, the special position of humans, even among all living beings, becomes clear immediately; in us, the two forms of demiurgy meet (*in Tim.* III 317.24–8 and 318.1–4). The rational soul and its vehicle are created by universal demiurgy, while the irrational powers and their vehicle as well as the ‘earthy’ body, i.e. our ordinary bodies, are the work of the young gods. But that is not all; one very special feature makes the position of humans even more precious, since it means that we genuinely belong to two different realms. This is the fact that we possess intellect. Intellect is not demiurgically fabricated, but stems directly from the higher causes; it transcends generation completely (*in Tim.* II 1.9–2.19; III 209.18–26).

#### 7.2.4. Complex Causation and Multiple Paradigms

Demiurgic production requires a paradigm. The universal demiurge, as well as every other demiurge, contemplates a model, always situated above itself, and subsequently transmits the powers contained in this model to posterior beings.<sup>43</sup> Often through a series of intermediaries, this leads to the production of some kind of being. Regarding the universal demiurge, we have said that he creates certain things directly, without using the lower gods as intermediaries. These creations will only be the kinds of things, or features of things, that can be created by an unchanging activity. For other creations, we probably have to think in terms of ‘energies’ that flow from the higher principles, canalized through the demiurge and passed on to lower divinities until some god picks them up in order to use them to realize some particular feature in the world of becoming. This often means combining them with other bits and pieces that flow through different channels. The lower demiurges act ‘as it were independently’ (*Theol. plat.* V 18, 69.20–1) and create either by their very being or else through an activity of theirs that takes place in time, depending on the demiurgic level at which they are situated. It should also be noted that these forces passed on from one demiurge to the next are subject to pluralization as they move downwards. This is the diversification that goes along with procession. Since the first demiurge is the source of the creative power of the lower

demiurges as outlined, it is also correct to say that he creates *everything*, though some things mediately: 'He creates [mortal beings], but through the young gods. For, before the latter create he has already created by his sole thinking.'<sup>44</sup> Or also: 'Concerning what is left, the demiurge certainly brings it into existence, but he immediately hands over its production to the young gods and proclaims them as responsible for the entire mortal nature' (*in Tim.* III 230.16–18). The demiurge even creates individual human beings, yet not qua individuals but only insofar as they are already contained in the universal.<sup>45</sup> The significance of this complex structure is that we do not have a *per accidens* causation of lower beings, which would be the case in the simpler scheme of things according to which, say, the demiurge creates another god, who in turn, but independently of the demiurge, produces something other. In that case, the product is merely accidentally related to the demiurge. As things stand, however, Proclus' demiurge is immediately and mediately involved in the creation of lower beings; immediately because he creates certain features of them directly, but mediately because of the intermediaries through which he creates other features. Even in the latter case, though, his involvement is not accidental, for it is his power in the sense of his efficient and paradigmatic causality that enables the intermediaries to do their job.<sup>46</sup>

An example may throw some light on this. The paradigm for the creation of the world is the so-called Intelligible Living Being (*Tim.* 30c2–31a1), of which Proclus says it is the very first *cause* of demiurgy<sup>47</sup> (note that this does not make it a *demiurge*). It makes sense that the paradigm is an animal or a living being, since the universe is held to be a living being as well (*Tim.* 30b1–c1; 92c5–7). The Intelligible Living Being contains four 'intelligible living beings', which are the models for the types of living beings inhabiting the world: celestial, aerial, aquatic, and terrestrial (*Theol. plat.* III 19). By contemplating the paradigm, the demiurge, an intellect, interiorizes it, which means that he intellectualizes it. By doing so, the four highest classes are diversified into lower species. Indeed the paradigms of the indivisible species (the *infimae species*) are said to pre-exist in the demiurge.<sup>48</sup> The demiurge thus thinks the species of living beings, but he does not think the individuals qua individuals (though he is aware of the fact that there will be individuals). The demiurges who come after him look at the demiurge; that is, they contemplate him and the paradigm as it exists in him intellectually, and think it in a mode proper to their own ontological rank. This is supposedly implied when Plato says that the young gods imitate the demiurge (*Tim.* 69c5). He is their model<sup>49</sup> and as such is, as it were, 'intelligible to them' (*in Tim.* II 3.6–8; III 110.12–30).

Proclus has a remarkable view on what Dionysus contemplates. The world has been made round and smooth by Hephaestus,<sup>50</sup> so smooth in fact that it works like a mirror. When Dionysus looks at it, he sees his own image reflected in the outer circumference of the world. Seduced by this image, he starts on his project of partial demiurgy (*in Tim.* II 80.19–31). Thus, Dionysus

is a demiurge who, in a sense, contemplates a model that itself belongs to the world of becoming, contrary to the universal demiurge (*Tim.* 28a6–b1). In another sense, however, he looks at what is intelligible and unchanging, for what he sees is himself and the images of the Forms within himself such as they have come down from the intelligible. They are filtered, or rather ‘specified’, through the demiurgic causes prior to him. Of course, this description is highly metaphorical. On a more abstract level, its meaning is that the demiurgic operation, while being based on an intelligible paradigm, is co-determined in its lower level operations by pre-existing structures, which are themselves the product of *other* transcendent causes.

### 7.3. THE CONCEPT OF NATURE

The principle of bodies is called nature.<sup>51</sup> Where universal nature, also called Fate, is the principle of the material universe as a whole, particular bodies also each have their own nature. These particular natures depend upon universal nature as their monad (*El. theol.* § 21, 24.22–5). Nature is inseparable from bodies and physically immersed in them, but as their principle, it precedes bodies and is thus incorporeal. It serves as the genuine cause, or more precisely, the proximate cause of bodies. Nevertheless, it is lower than soul properly speaking. It is a distinct, transitional hypostasis intermediate between soul and body. Nature may be a hypostasis of its own; it is not transcendent. Even the highest nature, universal or monadic nature (cf. *in Parm.* III 791.21–795.6), does not transcend the cosmos but is rather the inner-cosmic formative principle of the world.<sup>52</sup> In the *Timaeus* nature is called ‘divisible around bodies’ (cf. *Plat., Tim.* 35a2–3), since as an incorporeal principle, it is originally indivisible. Yet as the principle of bodies, it spreads itself out through them, thereby becoming divisible.<sup>53</sup> Nature contains the ‘reason-principles’ (*logoi*; *in Parm.* III 792.9–15), which originate in the demiurge, and through them, sustains bodies by imparting structure and unity onto them and causing their movement. It produces, conserves, and regenerates bodies and fills them with life, if only the faintest image of life (in the case of inanimate things). Therefore, it is an instrument of the gods. It is alive and has some form of self-motion, but contrary to the higher principles, it is no longer able to ‘see itself’; that is, revert to itself (*in Tim.* I 10.13–22; 12.20–8). It is the last of the demiurgic causes and the lower border of the domain of incorporeal substances, proceeding from Rheia,<sup>54</sup> the life-giving goddess as its ultimate cause. Thanks to nature, even the most lifeless of bodies participate in ‘some kind of soul’ (*in Tim.* I 11.9–27). Those things that are generated by nature (*ta phusei ginomena*) and that are in accordance with nature (*kata phusin*) are called natural (*phusika*). They are not nature, but its products.

Nature is not identified with the whole of 'that which becomes divisible around bodies', but just a part of it, as the divisible-around-bodies comprises three moments, as the inverse image of the triad Being-Life-Intellect: the perceptual powers that make up the irrational sensitive soul, but also the higher, cosmic forms of irrational life, nature as the principle of life (to this belongs also the so-called vegetative soul), and finally, the enmattered forms, which, as will become clear in section 7.4.3, can also be regarded as the unfolding of the reason-principles (*in Tim.* II 139.17–140.1; *El. theol.* § 190).

## 7.4. THE ONTOLOGICAL STRUCTURE OF BODIES

### 7.4.1. Hylomorphism, from Macroscopic Bodies Down to their Elements

The building blocks of the sublunary realm are the four elements. As totalities, they are demiurgically generated by the first demiurge, assisted by the associated demiurgic triad. The elements proceed in a definite order: first comes fire under the supervision of the hypercosmic Zeus, then air (its highest manifestation being supervised by the same deity), followed by water (under the responsibility of Poseidon, together with the lower forms of air), and finally earth, in the dominion of Pluto. The first demiurgy is only concerned with the elements as totalities, while the young gods create the individual elements, following the building instructions provided by the first demiurge. It is they who actually realize the geometric shapes in the substrate (*in Tim.* II 2.22–3.8).

However, Plato offers a double account of the elements: first, when he discusses the body of the world as a whole, and later, when he broaches the aspect of necessity, which can be understood as the spelling out of the necessary material conditions for the production of the elements and the properties appropriate to them. Of course, the fact that there is a double description is in no way coincidental. The first account, Proclus suggests, focuses on the teleological. It explains that the body of the world needs visibility and tangibility. For visibility, fire is necessary, while earth is necessary for tangibility. The two other elements are bound together by two further elements that act as intermediaries.<sup>55</sup> How the demiurge realizes these elements in matter, though, is explained in the second account. There, Timaeus explains that the elements are themselves compositions of triangles. These elemental triangles are themselves already hylomorphic compounds. Proclus uses the hylomorphic interpretation of geometric atomism in order to counter Aristotle's objections to Plato's theory. He uses the text of Timaeus Locrus, the alleged *Urtext* of Plato's *Timaeus*, in support of this interpretation.<sup>56</sup>

All material bodies have a hylomorphic structure; they consist of a material and a formal principle.<sup>57</sup> The functions of matter and form, however, are fulfilled by different entities depending on the level. Some bodies are less material than others and in some cases, Proclus even speaks of immaterial bodies.<sup>58</sup> What is meant by this expression is not that these bodies do not have a hylomorphic structure, but rather that their matter is not the ordinary matter that is constitutive of ordinary sublunary bodies. They contain a higher, finer type of substrate and have a correspondingly superior form. Ordinary sublunary bodies are aggregates of the four elements. At the macroscopic level—for instance, at the level of the bodies of individual animals—the cohesion of these aggregates is assured by a formal principle. At a level below that—for instance, at the level of the parts of animals—a formal principle is necessary for guaranteeing unity and stability. The material components that Aristotle considers to be homoeomeric and out of which the organs are formed are not, on a Platonic analysis, homoeomeric at all, but are themselves aggregates of all four elements. They are mixtures, more precisely, juxtapositions of elementary corpuscles according to certain proportions (the proportion belonging again to form). The Platonic theory is indeed atomistic. The elements consist of corpuscles that are indivisible, in the sense that they cannot be divided into parts that are still of the same nature as the whole. Thus, ‘atoms’ are not indivisible in an absolute sense, but when they are split, the parts no longer constitute material elements. They are merely fragments that can recombine into one of the four regular structures. Corpuscles themselves are determined by geometric forms, more precisely by four of the five regular rectilinear stereometric bodies (also known as the Platonic bodies): the tetrahedron or pyramid, the hexahedron or cube, the octahedron, and the icosahedron, constitutive of fire, earth, air, and water respectively. This theory is therefore called ‘geometric atomism’.<sup>59</sup> Note that Proclus does not consider an individual particle to be a token of a certain element. Only a plurality of corpuscles is held to constitute the element in question. Hence, one should not say, for instance, that a single tetrahedron is by itself already fire (*apud* Simpl., *in De c.* 649.29–650.3). The surfaces of which the polyhedra are composed are reducible to elementary triangles. Through the decomposition of figures into their triangles and recombination, elemental change is possible. Earth constitutes a special case, however, because the primary triangle of which it is constituted is of a different type than that of the other three. Hence it cannot participate in the cycle of elemental transformation.<sup>60</sup> The geometric forms of the elements are supposed to produce basic properties of the elements. The most fundamental qualities, however, are not the canonical Aristotelian ones, but are rather derived from the first account of the elements of *Timaeus*. The provision of tangibility or solidity, for instance, is the most fundamental qualitative property of earth and derives from the largeness of the corresponding type of elementary corpuscle, the bluntness of its sides and its resulting

immobility. More derivative properties are explained in the second, geometric account. They supervene in a rather complex way on the primary properties and on the interaction of the elemental corpuscles in the receptacle. Heat, for instance, is not the property of a single element, but results from the interaction between corpuscles of different types, one of which features angular sharpness, fineness of sides, a smaller size, and a high velocity (cf. Opsomer 2012b: 163). The explanation of elemental properties in terms of geometric properties constitutes a form of reductionism from qualities to properties that are, in a sense, quantitative (although shape belongs to the category of quality, the geometric properties, despite being qualitative, are held to be closer to quantity and the body; Simpl., in *De c.* 640.32–641.9).

However, this type of reductionism is not eliminative. The reality of the higher-level properties is in no way denied. Rather, they are emphasized in Timaeus' first account. It is those properties that the demiurges intend to realize in matter. In order to do so, they have to make use of the material conditions that belong to the order of necessity, as Plato calls it. At each level of composition, the formal cause structures matter in such a way as to make it suited to receive a higher form. Seen in this manner, demiurgy on the level of bodies consists in creating an aptitude (*epitêdeiotês*)<sup>61</sup> in different levels of pre-existent matter combined with the subsequent imposition of ever higher forms. The same structure explains 'ensoulment'. Bodies are made ready to receive a vegetative soul. As a result, the body is vitalized, amounting to the creation of a new hylomorphic structure. The resulting compound is now apt to receive the irrational forces of sensation and appetite. At the moment of parturition, the body is, in the case of humans, ready to receive the rational soul, which, equipped with its own ethereal vehicle, descends<sup>62</sup> from the heavens, through the celestial, down into the sublunary realm and, on its way, is equipped with the irrational forces, borne in their own pneumatic vehicle.<sup>63</sup> This general characteristic of the fabrication process, according to which lower entities need to be prepared in order to receive the higher ones, is prefigured by the famous piece of reasoning made by the demiurge in the *Timaeus*. He wants the world to be endowed with intellect, but in order for that to be possible, it needs to have a soul. He prepares the body so that it can receive soul and soul so that it can receive intellect (30b1–6). As far as the works of the second demiurgy are concerned, the lower substrata precede that of the higher in time. In the case of the first demiurgy, this order—ordinary from the human perspective—does not need to be respected (which is why the world soul can be said to be prior to the world body, if not in time, then at least in the order of production).

This brief, simplified survey of the ontological analysis of material bodies shows the pervasiveness of hylomorphic structures at different levels. As a matter of fact, for Proclus, they are instances of the collaboration between the limit and unlimitedness; these are located just below the One and



pervade all of reality.<sup>64</sup> Indeed, according to a famous metaphysical rule, the higher the principle, the further down its influence reaches. Olympiodorus (*in Alc.* 109.18–111.2) calls this ‘Proclus’ rule’.<sup>65</sup> In hylomorphic compounds, *peras* is instantiated as the formal principle, while the material principle represents the *apeiron*, the unlimitedness or principle of determinability. At each level, the material principle offers a certain aptitude for a specific type or level of form. In sublunary hylomorphic compounds (from elementary corpuscles to macroscopic bodies), form and matter, understood as immanent constituents—i.e. Aristotelian form and matter—are no longer true causes, as we have seen. Instead, they are merely auxiliary causes, insofar as they are mere immanent, ‘dead’ constituents of material bodies. Of course, they are derived from higher principles that are themselves held to be alive. The formal aspect derives from demiurgic principles, but not the material aspects. Indeed, as Plato teaches in the *Timaeus*, the demiurge has to work with material that is already there. Interpreted in a non-chronological way, this means that the material used by the demiurge is ontologically independent from him. The matter that goes into the creation of sublunary (and celestial) bodies is indeed directly caused by entities that are superior to the demiurge. That matter is produced *directly* by higher causes means that its production is not mediated through demiurgic causes. This idea is again in conformity with the Proclean rule. It would be wrong, however, to conceive of the matter that is constitutive of the primary triangles as ontologically simple. On the contrary, it is itself already a multilayered compound. Likewise, the form of these triangles requires some more analysis, as it too is complex. Both of these complexities are, moreover, in some way related.

#### 7.4.2. The Substrate(s)

Proclus never offers a complete account of his understanding of the substrate. The theory, then, must be pieced together from various brief remarks in his works and that of his successors, as so many other doctrines pertaining to the natural world.<sup>66</sup> Here I rank the substrates from low to high. It goes without saying that none of these levels can have a physically separate existence; they can only be separated in thought. The substrate can only exist physically as an inseparable part of hylomorphic compounds.

1. The first or ultimate substrate. The substrate that is ontologically lowest and is constitutive of every corporeal entity is variously called the first substrate or prime matter (*hulê*), space (*chôra*), or unlimited (*apeiron*) (terminological polyphony across various testimonies constitutes a major difficulty for the reconstructive effort). It is directly caused by the first principle and lacks any kind of determination. It is that which

derives directly from the principle of limitlessness and, by itself, it does not have any share in limit. It has nothing formal and possesses neither motion nor rest. It has no dimensionality, no quality, and no quantity.

2. The second substrate or 'qualityless body' (sometimes also called matter). Contrary to the first substrate, the second substrate is already a composite, insofar as it is a combination of the unlimited (the first substrate) with limit. Because of this minimal composition, it is a body. This is also the first entity that has dimensions (*to prôton diastaton*). As extended, it is infinitely divisible and thus constitutes a continuum, its infinity expressing its indeterminacy (*in Parm.* VII 1194.9–10). The three-dimensional extension of the second substrate is not unlimited. It is the extension of the universe as a whole, which is finite; this is due to the influence of limit (*in Parm.* VI 1123.9–10). Except for its finite three-dimensional extension, the second substrate lacks any determination. If the second substrate has the extension of the universe, one would think that it is spherical by itself, prior to any demiurgic intervention. In *Timaeus* 33b1–7, though, it is the demiurge who decides that the universe should have the form of a sphere. Proclus considers the sphericity to be the 'fourth gift of the demiurge' (*in Tim.* II 68.14–19), but it was not clear what he would say about the shape of the qualityless body. Maybe it does not possess any determinate shape by itself, insofar as shape is, after all, subsumed under the category of quality,<sup>67</sup> and merely a constant finite bulk. The second substrate has interesting characteristics that correspond to, and are reflections of, the five highest genera from the *Sophist* (248a4–256e5): it has being (*ousia*), difference (*heterotês*), sameness (*tautotês*), motion (*kinêsis*), and rest (*stasis*).<sup>68</sup> Difference has to do with its three-dimensionality, sameness with its continuity. Because of these two principles, it can be considered to have quantity. It lacks similarity and dissimilarity (*homoiotês* and *anhomoiotês*), though, because those two-placed predicates are applicable only to qualities and the second substrate is a qualityless body. G. Van Riel (2009: 245) identifies the second substrate with 'corporeal mass' (*onkos*), or 'that which is in discordant and disorderly motion' (*Tim.* 30a4–5), and with the 'shaken receptacle' (*Tim.* 52d2–53b5).
3. In some texts Proclus distinguishes a third level preceding the matter in ordinary hylomorphic compounds (from the triangles upwards).<sup>69</sup> This is the level of the precosmic 'traces of the forms'. Their being precosmic means that they are situated at an ontological level below that of the triangles and the elements. The precosmic traces thus constitute a further formal determination of the qualityless body, the composite of which can, in a sense, be considered a third substrate. The precosmic mass is supposed to be visible, which would be impossible if it lacked

quality. Proclus expressly relates visibility to being qualified, i.e. to standing in relations of similarity and dissimilarity to other qualities.<sup>70</sup> This third substrate, being a composite of the second substrate with the traces of the forms, is the level directly underlying demiurgy—a substrate that offers itself up to the demiurge and already verges towards the participation in form (*in Tim.* I 387.30–388.1). Proclus refers to it as discordant and disordered; an expression that he somewhat misleadingly uses for the second substrate as well. It is clear, though, that the third substrate also has to be disordered, as it lacks the beautiful structures imposed by true forms. It merely has traces, or ‘forerunners of the forms’ (cf. *in Tim.* I 387.8–388.28). The third substrate provides the matter for the elemental triangles, which as composites of form and matter, are bodies in possession of genuine qualities.<sup>71</sup>

Where does *antitupia*, ‘resistance’, make its first appearance? In one sense, *antitupia* appears with the procession of the lowest element, earth, as it is earth that gives resistance or solidity to the material world. Since all elements ‘have a share’ in one another<sup>72</sup> they all share in earth’s tangibility.<sup>73</sup> Yet there would seem to be an *antitupia* that is more fundamental than that of earth, because even in the state of body that lies conceptually before the elements (precosmic matter) there is some kind of solidity. It is possible to understand this as that feature which makes co-location of bodies impossible. Physical bodies or shapes differ from geometrical stereometric bodies (mathematical entities) in precisely this respect. As the practice of the geometers shows, mathematical bodies can overlap without any problem. This is excluded in the case of physical bodies, and that which is responsible for that impossibility is precisely their *antitupia*. The fitting together of the triangles, which is constitutive of earth and thereby prior to its origin, already presupposes the fact that the triangles cannot overlap.<sup>74</sup>

Like everything in our world, the multilayered substrate is causally dependent upon higher principles. Since the substrate constitutes the material with which the demiurge has to work, it lies before all demiurgy. This means, of course, that it has not been demiurgically produced. In conformity with the Proclean rule, its various levels are produced by causes above that of the demiurge, i.e. above the third member of the first intellectual triad. The lower (i.e. the more fundamental) the substrate, the higher the cause. In various passages, Proclus says that matter, i.e. the ultimate substrate, is produced by the highest principle, which is its ‘unspeakable cause’. In other words, it is generated by the One. Proclus also says that it is generated by the unlimitedness (*apeiria*) prior to One-Being.<sup>75</sup> The *apeiria* above Being is indeed the very first expression of the ineffable first principle.<sup>76</sup>

The traces of the forms in the receptacle are caused as illuminations from the ontological levels above the demiurge, and especially by the activities that

proceed directly from the paradigm, independently of any mediation by lower, demiurgical orders. Whereas the demiurge produces 'together with' the paradigm, these higher causes, and especially the Forms in the paradigm are active 'prior to', and independently of, the demiurge. In other words, matter already participates in the paradigm before there is demiurgy. There does not appear to be a single causal principle producing the traces of the forms. Rather, they are the result of 'all the orders of gods above the demiurge' and 'especially' of the inner activity of the universal paradigm, the Intelligible Living Being (*in Tim.* I 387.14–28; *in Eucl.* 88.26–89.10). Nor is it clear what its special contribution to the world may be. That may explain why scholars have been reluctant to consider it a third substrate. Indeed, Proclus never refers to it as such. It is clear, however, that in some sense, it constitutes a separate level and that it is that which is 'taken over' by the demiurge when he begins to construct the corporeal world.

#### 7.4.3. The Formal Cause: Reason Principles, Enmattered Forms, Qualities

Proclus is firmly committed to the idea that all causes are incorporeal (*El. theol.* § 80). Moreover, he holds that qualities are immaterial and, indeed, that they belong to the formal aspect of compounds. The formal principles that give shape, structure, and order to the world and all of its parts are causally contained in the demiurge(s) and enter corporeal beings via Soul and Nature. They are usually called reason-principles (*logoi*); they are immanent in nature and steer all biological and generally all natural processes (cf. *in Tim.* III 191.7–8; *in Parm.* III 791.21–795.6). They become more diversified and specified as they descend. Once they are present in the body, they produce the form that is constitutive of, and immanent to, the hylomorphic compound. The immanent 'enmattered form' (*enhulon eidos*) is called the tenth level of limit at *in Parm.* VI and it coheres and restrains the unlimitedness of matter. Proclus alludes to Aristotle when he adds that some people wrongly think that the combination of limit and the unlimited is restricted to this type of matter and form (1123.11–14). Proclus considers the enmattered form to be equivalent to Aristotle's forms, to which he denies, as we have seen, the status of genuine causes.

In a fragment of the later part of the *Timaeus* commentary preserved by Philoponus, Proclus says that when Plato speaks of copies of beings entering and leaving the receptacle (*Tim.* 50c4–5) he means not only qualities (*poiotêtes*), but also enmattered forms (*enhula eidê*).<sup>77</sup> Clearly, enmattered forms are distinguished from qualities. Both are incorporeal, specifically as that which 'becomes divided in the vicinity of body'.<sup>78</sup> This is insofar that qualities and enmattered forms divide themselves in the masses (*onkoi*) of bodies.

In the third book of the *Timaeus* commentary, however, Proclus lists three types of entities that belong to the forms that later become divided, one kind of which are the 'natural reason principles' (*logoi phusikoi*) that divide themselves over qualityless body (II 139.19–20), but which he also indiscriminately calls 'forms (*eidê*) that divide themselves over the masses of bodies' (II, 139.30).<sup>79</sup>

Apparently, then, Proclus does not always care to make the distinction between *logoi* and (*enhula*) *eidê*. When greater precision is required, however, Proclus does distinguish between reason-principles, enmattered forms, and properties (Helmig 2006). He does so most clearly in his exegesis of *Tim.* 31c4–32a7, where Plato mentions number, mass, and power (*arithmos*, *onkos*, *dunamis*), which Proclus considers to be constituents of all ordinary bodies (not, of course, of the very first body, the qualityless second substrate). Proclus explains that the '(physical) numbers' are actually the *enhula eidê*, while the 'masses' are their three-dimensional extensions and the 'powers' are the qualities that shape and keep together the bodies (*in Tim.* II 25.1–23). Together, they form a dynamic structure that corresponds to the well-known triad being-power-activity. Proclus comes close to blending the second and third member of the triad when he explains that the essence of the enmattered form is in itself unextended, but spreads itself out in three dimensions throughout matter by projecting its powers, which 'are' qualities (*in Tim.* II 25.6–9; see also *in Tim.* II 25.14–16). If one understands the last phrase as saying that the powers *become* qualities when they are projected, the three moments of the triad are preserved. Qualities indeed only originate when the power of the substance extends itself through matter. The qualities mentioned here are, more precisely, essential qualitative properties (*poiotêtes ousiôdeis*) such as the heat of fire or the humidity of water (*in Tim.* II 25.14–16). These are qualities that are linked to the essence of the substance.<sup>80</sup> This passage helps us to understand why Proclus in the fragment preserved by Philoponus claims that not only qualities, but also enmattered forms enter the receptacle. Strictly speaking, that which enters the receptacle is an unextended form that thereby becomes an enmattered form and, as it extends its powers, produces the qualities. Qualities, then, make things into qualifieds. Here, we arrive at the final stage of the formal principle, the ultimate and lowest copies of the paradigmatic forms: immanent constituents of ordinary things.

The dynamic unfolding of the formal principles, as described, acquires additional significance in the context of Proclus' account of geometric atomism. The demiurge creates the elements by imposing a geometrical shape onto the (second) substrate.<sup>81</sup> Geometric entities are in their highest manifestations unextended (Opsomer 2009: 214–25). This is without any doubt also the case for the geometric demiurgic *logoi*. It is only when they are instantiated in matter that they become three-dimensionally extended triangles<sup>82</sup> and polyhedra. Because of their shapes and dynamic interactions,

the elements and the complex combinations between them acquire qualities. In other words, the qualities supervene on the extended shapes and are causally prefigured in the essence of the geometric form, which is the thing that enters the receptacle. This also concurs with a remark made by Proclus' teacher Syrianus, who claims that the polyhedra from the *Timaeus* are not mathematical abstractions (cf. *Simpl.*, in *De c.* 567.11–17), but rather 'active and demiurgic forces in nature' (in *Met.* 85.35–86.5). In their own realm, they are partless and indivisible, but when copies of them enter the receptacle, they bestow extended polyhedric structures upon it. That is, they are immaterial principles, which are partless and indivisible in their own realm.<sup>83</sup> Their copies enter the receptacle and bestow polyhedric structures upon it. Thus, demiurgic forces have to act in such a way that the required macroscopic qualities are realized by the processes operating at a microscopic level. The interaction of the polyhedra is intended by the demiurge(s), which is why these geometrically describable structures can rightly be called demiurgic themselves, and generally organized in such a way that the required higher qualities come about. While the latter can in turn be seen as images of higher causes, geometric structures can be regarded as the material aptitude required for their physical realization. So beautiful is the order of demiurgy that the two sides nicely fit together. Both polyhedra and qualities are living images of intelligible causes, but the first produce the material conditions for the realization of the latter.<sup>84</sup>

## NOTES

1. It is assumed that in most cases, Proclus' different works reflect basically the same physical doctrines, partly because Proclus adopted many of his views from his predecessors (especially Syrianus), and furthermore because there are indications that he constantly reworked his texts in the light of his other writings. Differences presumably come about through the different contexts, for instance the Platonic passages that form the background of specific discussions, and the various degrees of technicality of the account.
2. The different modes of theology are discussed in Ch. 10 in this volume.
3. For this principle see also Ch. 3 in this volume.
4. See Ch. 5 in this volume.
5. For the full argument, see Opsomer (2000b).
6. Cf. Johansen (2004: 63); Betegh (2010); Bryan (2012).
7. Martijn (2010a: 214) distinguishes four levels in Proclus' account of nature (*φυσιολογία*): theological, mathematical, empirical, and biological physics. Each of these has its own method.
8. e.g. *Hyp.* VII 5, 214.17–18. See also Lernould (2005). For the epistemic status of astronomical hypotheses and Plato's astronomy, see Opsomer (2012a).

9. *In Tim.* I 229.1–3; 258.12–23; 226.22–227.3. Various aspects of Proclus' use of the hypothetical method in the study of nature have been examined extensively by Martijn (2010a: ch. 3), whose conclusions I summarize here.
10. See also *in Eucl.* 75.19–20.
11. Cf. Plato, *Resp.* VI 510b4–511b1. The Platonists took *Tim.* 53c1–3 as further evidence for the claim that the study of nature uses the hypothetical method of the geometers. Cf. Simpl., *in De c.* 641.24–8.
12. For the theory of causes, see Steel (2003b) and Ch. 5 in this volume.
13. Proclus thinks that Aristotle's unmoved mover is merely a final cause. Cf. Sorabji (1988: 252–3); Steel (2003b: 180).
14. As a matter of fact, it is alleged that in this respect too Plato is following the Pythagoreans, i.e. Timaeus Locrus: *in Tim.* I 2.30.
15. Xenocrates Fr. 54 Heinze; Crantor, Fr. 4 Mullach; Speusippus Fr. 61a–b Tarán. Cf. Arist., *De c.* I 10, 280a1; Procl., *in Tim.* I 277.8–10; Simpl., *in De c.* 303.33–304.15.
16. Cf. Sorabji (2004b: ii, ch. 9).
17. Today, many scholars believe that the *Timaeus* should indeed be understood in this non-literal way. Those scholars think that Plato scattered clues throughout his narration that point to the impossibility of a literal understanding of the story. The fact that Plato breaks off the narration several times and starts again from a different point, while insisting on the difficulty of the narration, is believed to constitute the clearest indication of the fact that the history of the origin of the world cannot be told correctly, precisely because there is no such history (Baltes 1996). Not everyone is convinced by this line of thought: cf. Vallejo (1997); Gregory (2007: 149–51). Johansen (2004: 89–91) and Broadie (2012: 243–77) argue for a middle way.
18. The fragments are collected and translated in Lang and Macro (2001). For an analysis of Proclus' arguments, including those in the *Timaeus* commentary, see Baltes (1978); Lang (2005); Gleede (2009).
19. One may object that, according to the discourse of negative theology, the One or the Good should not be called a cause. In some sense, however, it must be a cause, more precisely a productive cause (of course it is a final cause too). Otherwise, its existence would not matter for other things. But it is clear, at least for a Platonist, that without it nothing would exist. Hence, *we* should call it a cause.
20. See Proclus' commentary: *in Tim.* I 258.9–264.3, with Martijn (2010a: 115–18).
21. For a thorough study of the prooemium, see Martijn (2010a: 67–162). Lernould (2001) has been the first to offer a lucid account of the architectonics of Proclus' commentary. In Timaeus' account, Proclus detects a systematic structure of hypotheses and demonstrations, leading up to a description of demiurgy. This is itself twofold: the first, universal demiurgy, containing a list of ten 'gifts' of the demiurge, and the second demiurgy, starting with the speech addressed to the young gods. The progression of the ten gifts, from lesser to higher, is the subject of Kutash (2011). They are (i) perceptibility, (ii) analogy (geometrical proportion), (iii) wholeness, (iv) sphericity, (v) self-sufficiency, (vi) circular motion, (vii) the world soul, (viii) hypercosmic time, (ix), the heavenly bodies as sanctuaries of the gods and producers of the perfect year (encosmic time), (x) plenitude as a result of the presence of all the species of living beings. See also Baltzly (2007: 2).

22. *Tim.* 28c3–4. Proclus insists that the sequence of the words ‘maker’ and ‘father’ is important. The same sequence, with the equivalent ‘demiurge’ for ‘maker’ can be found twice in Plato: *Tim.* 41a7; *Pol.* 273b2. Proclus claims that the titles ‘father’ and ‘father and maker’ designate higher deities, and ‘maker’ lower ones.
23. See Ch. 5 and Appendix I.
24. It should be noted that immortal human souls resort under the first demiurgy, yet their division into kinds as well as their individuality are due to the cooperation of further demiurgic forces. The first demiurge produces what is universal about their substance: cf. in *Tim.* III 244.12–245.13; 254.6–10; 258.1–6; 264.11–19.
25. See Ch. 4 in this volume.
26. This is not unrelated to Timaeus’ awkward, non-linear narration of the creation of the cosmic body and soul. Timaeus narrates the creation of the soul after that of the body, but says that this sequence is wrong and points to the difficulty of the account (*Tim.* 34b10–35a1). Indeed, how *could* he have described the creation of the soul first, as we expect soul to be always the soul of some body? Moreover, Timaeus has already talked about the creation of the world as such before he starts to give an account of the creation of the body of the world at 31b4. Proclus repeatedly discusses the significance of these narrative ploys. Cf. in *Tim.* II 2.9–23; 113.19–115.5, and esp. III 322.2–17; *Theol. plat.* III 10, 41.8–12.
27. Cf. in *Tim.* I 262.16–25.
28. *Theol. plat.* V 17, 62.17–63.5; in *Tim.* I 399.20–4.
29. In *Tim.* III 244.14–16. The idea of creation by thinking goes back as far as Xenophanes: 21B25 DK.
30. Cf. Opsomer and Steel (2003: 114 nn. 131–2), and Ch. 6 in this volume.
31. See Chs 4 and 5 in this volume.
32. For a detailed analysis of the different levels of demiurgy, see Opsomer (2003, 2006a).
33. ‘Universal’ here is not used in the metaphysical sense as designating only non-spatiotemporal universals. Universal is also what pertains to the universe as a whole or to complete sets of things (i.e. the totality of elementary corpuscles). The opposite of ‘universal’ is ‘partial’ or ‘divided’, i.e. that which pertains to parts.
34. In *Tim.* II 5.20–1; cf. *Tim.* 33a7.
35. The function of this triad, or triadic principle, is explained in Ch. 5.
36. Cf. Opsomer (2003: 38–45).
37. In *Theol. plat.* VI 10, 46.16–23, Proclus explains that the three gods divide up the elements amongst themselves. Zeus<sub>2</sub> is responsible for fire and the purest form of air, Poseidon for the elements in the middle, and Pluto for earth. Therefore, it is an oversimplification to say that the demiurge produces the totalities of the elements.
38. Cf. in *Tim.* II 2.23–3.8. The elements in their entirety are ‘whole parts’ (ὅλικά μέρη) and are created in the course of the first demiurgy, whereas the creation of individual species (ἄτομα) and genuine particulars (ὄντως μερικά) is assigned to the young gods.
39. The creation of living beings and their souls indeed belongs to universal demiurgy, as the wholenesses of the living beings complete the wholeness of the world. In this respect, the world is a whole *in* the parts. Cf. in *Tim.* III 97.24–98.23, and for the three types of ‘wholes’ *El. theol.* §§ 66–71. Finally, the immortality of individual



- souls places them within the first demiurgy, whereas the fact that they are individuals allegedly explains why Plato discusses them in the framework of the second demiurgy: Lernould (2001: 58 n. 62).
40. The young gods are coextensive with time: *in Tim.* III 311.13–16.
  41. *In Tim.* III 321.32–322.17. Proclus connects this with the view that the immortal soul enters the body only at the moment of birth (*in Tim.* III 322.17–31).
  42. *In Tim.* I 11.19–20. Even more complicated is the picture given in *in Parm.* III 821.1–22.
  43. For the paradigmatic cause see also *in Parm.* IV 888.15–24: the paradigm is situated between the final and the efficient cause, but has also a final and efficient aspect: it is the final cause for generated things that strive for assimilation to it, and it produces ‘by its very being’ (thus it produces the traces of the forms: see section 7.4.2 in this chapter).
  44. *In Tim.* III 228.26–8. See also III 222.2–5; 225.26–31; *Theol. plat.* V 16, 53.19–20; V 18, 69.20–1.
  45. This is nicely explained in *in Tim.* III 198.19–29 and III 228.20–5.
  46. See also Opsomer (2000a: 126–7). Analogously, the first principle is directly present in everything: *in Tim.* I 209.13–24.
  47. Actually, the paradigm of time is still higher. It is eternity, i.e. the second intelligible triad. Cf. *Theol. plat.* III 20, 72.23–73.7. See also Table 7.1 in this chapter.
  48. *Theol. plat.* III 15, 53.6–15; *in Tim.* I 425.11–427.2. See also Ch. 5 in this volume.
  49. In this sense, the demiurge himself is the paradigm, as suggested in *Tim.* 29e3.
  50. *In Tim.* II 70.21–31. For Hephaestus, see *Theol. plat.* V 24, 88.5–11; VI 22, 15–17. Hephaestus is the third god of the first triad of the hypercosmic-encosmic realm. This triad is a demiurgic triad that depends on the hypercosmic demiurgic triad associated with the universal demiurge. The hypercosmic-encosmic demiurgic triad still belongs to the first demiurgy, yet it also builds the transition to encosmic demiurgy. It was not mentioned in our survey of demiurgic causes, which was concerned only with the main classes of demiurgy.
  51. *In Tim.* I 9.31–12.30; *in Parm.* VI 1045.20–1046.10. The issues of this section receive a more comprehensive discussion in Martijn (2010a: 19–66) and Lernould (2012).
  52. Lernould (2005: 92–4); Martijn (2010a: 40–5).
  53. *Theol. plat.* I 15, 76.18–24. It does probably not become infinitely divisible, adopting the structure of the mathematical continuum, but is rather divided into discrete units.
  54. *Theol. plat.* V 32; *in Tim.* III 249.19–20 and see also 7.2.3 in this chapter. This ultimate cause of nature is also what is shown to the souls in Plat., *Tim.* 41e1–3. Cf. *in Tim.* III 266.9–14; 271.22–4. Cf. Martijn (2010a: 50–1).
  55. See *in Tim.* III 357.10–13, with Opsomer (2012b: 169–70).
  56. *Tim. Loc.* § 32, 97e, cited at *Simpl.*, *in De c.* 564.4–8 and 641.9–14 (with explicit reference to Proclus). See also Ulacco and Opsomer (2014).
  57. This is also linked with the concept of demiurgy. Every artisanal production consists in the creation of a form and the according adornment of the underlying matter: *Theol. plat.* V 24, 88.4–5.

58. *In Tim.* II 46.16–18. Cf. Siorvanes (1996: 237–9, with n. 61 on p. 259).
59. Cf. Mueller (2012) and Opsomer (2012b). Proclus' interpretation of geometric atomism needs to be reconstructed, mainly from Simplicius' *Commentary on De caelo*, as Proclus' own *Timaeus* commentary breaks off before he gets to the relevant sections in the *Timaeus*. Simplicius quotes extensively from a work by Proclus in which the latter refuted Aristotle's criticism of Plato's theory. Proclus' lost treatise *Examination of Aristotle's Objections Against Plato's Timaeus*, the probable source of the arguments refuting the objections against geometric atomism, has been reconstructed by Steel (2005b).
60. The possibility that Proclus thought that dissolution could go beyond the level of elementary triangles should not be excluded. In this case, the 'stuff' the triangle of the earth-type is made of could be used for the formation of other triangles. This is a suggestion that Simplicius apparently presents as his own. It is not impossible, though, that it had already been made by Proclus. Cf. Simpl., *in De c.* 644.11–18.
61. For this notion, see Steel (1996b).
62. Here, the verb 'to descend' stops being a mere metaphor and acquires its proper meaning.
63. For the pneumatic vehicle see also Ch. 6 in this volume.
64. Cf. *Theol. plat.* III 8; III 10, 40.10–41.15. See Ch. 4 in this volume.
65. It is exemplified by *El. theol.* § 101.
66. My account relies heavily on Van Riel (2009) and to some extent also on De Haas (1995: 91–9).
67. The Platonists adopt this aspect of Aristotle's account of the categories. See Arist., *Cat.* 8, 10a11.
68. *In Parm.* II 735.23–736.6. The transmitted text also mentions 'form' (εἶδος, 735.26), which is strange. Cf. Van Riel (2009: 245 n. 39). In Luna and Segonds' edition, they delete the words καὶ εἶδος; cf. Luna and Segonds (2010: 21 n. 1 on 164–5).
69. Van Riel (2009: 242, 45–6).
70. *In Parm.* II 735.18–736.6; *in Tim.* I 387.11. The lack of substantial presence of earth in the heavenly realm may explain why up there elements may interpenetrate. Cf. Simpl., *in Phys.* 531.5–7. This could also explain the colocation of 'relatively immaterial' bodies.
71. Qualities are the first bearers of the more and less: *in Parm.* VII 1194.11–12.
72. It is unclear how this is to be interpreted in view of geometric atomism.
73. This is true even for the highest manifestation of the elements in the celestial regions, where we find only the 'summits' of the elements. There, the other three elements are merely causally prefigured in the highest form of fire. This highest form of fire can also be called aether and is considered to be a fifth element.
74. See also Simpl., *in Cat.* 272.8–14; *in Phys.* 623.14–18.
75. *In Tim.* I 209.13–24; 384.30–385.14; *El. theol.* § 72, 68.24–5; *Theol. plat.* III 10, 40.14–16. One passage, *in Parm.* IV 844.11–26, seems to provide a counterexample, since there Proclus seems to make One-Being the cause of the first receptacle. Cf. Van Riel (2009: 248–9). In my view, however, Proclus wants to say that the One-Being is the cause of the second receptacle.
76. Its influence reaches further down than that of limit: cf. Van Riel (2009: 252).

77. *In Tim.*, Fr. from book V in volume III 357.10–13. In this passage, Proclus discusses the question of where these copies go when they leave the receptacle. His answer is that they disappear into nothingness (III 357.13–358.3).
78. *Theol. plat.* I 14, 62.1–6; *in Tim.* II 4.20–1. Cf. Plat., *Tim.* 35a2–3.
79. *In Tim.* III 139.20–140.10. The two other types are forces of life and perception, i.e. irrational soul forces. Cf. Opsomer (2006b: 154–5).
80. The examples given in *in Tim.* II 25.14–15 are not meant to be very precise. Later in the same book, Proclus explains that warmth, cold, and humidity are not the primary qualities of the elements *in Tim.* II 38.31–41.14.
81. Or perhaps on the third substrate, although Proclus and Simplicius only talk about the ἄπειρον σῶμα (qualitiless body) in their discussion of geometric atomism.
82. It would be more precise to say that they are prisms for Proclus, since they are supposed to be tri-dimensional.
83. Cf. Syr., *in Met.* 88.13–19; 95.31–2; 96.5. See also 86.29–34 (the rival view).
84. I wish to thank Sean Winkler for help with the English of this chapter.

## Mathematics and the Sciences

*Dominic O'Meara*

In this chapter we will consider Proclus' philosophy of mathematics. The expression 'philosophy about mathematics' (*philosophia peri ta mathêmata*) can be found in one of Proclus' major sources, Iamblichus' *De communi mathematica scientia* (*De comm. math.*),<sup>1</sup> a text which discusses many questions that Proclus will take up and that still characterize modern philosophy of mathematics: questions about the nature of the objects studied in the mathematical sciences, the methods used in these sciences, the relations between mathematics and other sciences such as physics, etc. It is for his contribution to reflection on these philosophical questions that Proclus is chiefly known in the field of mathematics, as well as for his recording of valuable information about the history of earlier Greek mathematics, rather than for technical contributions to mathematics itself.

Although there are important passages in the works of Plato and Aristotle relating to various issues in the philosophy of mathematics, only two complete works in the philosophy of mathematics have survived from antiquity, Iamblichus' *De comm. math.* and Proclus' *Commentary on the first book of Euclid's Elements* (especially the first prologue of this commentary). Proclus' commentary (*in Eucl.*) became an influential source of reflection for Renaissance mathematicians and philosophers after it was published in a Latin translation by Francesco Barozzi (1537–1604) in 1560.<sup>2</sup> It was much admired by Kepler, who quoted large extracts from it in his *Harmonice mundi* (1619), and has continued to attract interest in, for example, the work of the German philosopher Nicolai Hartmann (1882–1950).

In what follows we will begin with some preparatory sections dealing with (1) the principal passages in Plato and Aristotle where questions and problems are raised in the domain of the philosophy of mathematics as these questions and problems would be discussed by Proclus; (2) the sources used by Proclus in discussing these passages, in particular, Eudemus, Geminus, Nicomachus, Iamblichus, and Syrianus; and (3) the texts composed by Proclus relating more

specifically to mathematics. We will then consider Proclus' position on some of the major issues in the philosophy of mathematics: (4) the nature of the objects studied in mathematics, in particular as they relate to soul; (5) the distinction between the different mathematical sciences (arithmetic, geometry, harmonics,<sup>3</sup> astronomy); (6) the methods of mathematics; and (7) the relation between mathematics and other sciences, in particular, metaphysics and physics. We will conclude (8) with some remarks on Proclus' relation to the mathematics of his day.

### 8.1. QUESTIONS AND PROBLEMS IN PLATO AND ARISTOTLE

Plato frequently appeals to mathematics in his dialogues, for example, in the *Meno*, *Phaedo*, *Philebus*, *Statesman*, and *Laws*, but one crucial passage is to be found in the centre of the *Republic*, where Plato is discussing the education of future philosopher-kings. Plato introduces the image of a line (*Resp.* VI 509d–511e) which illustrates the transition from opinion based on sense-perception to a purely intellectual knowledge of the transcendent Forms, in particular the Form of the Good. The transition is made by mathematical thinking (*dianoia*), which uses visual diagrams but thinks of purely intelligible objects. However, mathematical thinking is defective in that it starts with 'hypotheses', taking them as given and not investigating them. The highest thinking, 'dialectic', investigates these hypotheses and reaches knowledge of the Forms. There is much that is puzzling in this passage of the *Republic*. What are these 'hypotheses'? What differentiates mathematical thinking from dialectic? Does mathematical thinking deal with objects (we will call them 'mathematical objects') which are different from Forms and different from the objects of sense-perception? At any rate, it is clear that Plato sees mathematics as a very valuable educational means (*Resp.* VII 523aff.) for reaching the highest knowledge, knowledge of the Forms, a means for turning around the soul's 'eye' (*Resp.* VII 527de, 533d), away from the objects of sense-perception and towards the highest knowledge.

Another text of central importance is the account given in Plato's *Timaeus* of the making of the world. Here mathematics, rather than acting as an education of the human mind, leading it up to ultimate knowledge, appears as the knowledge used by the maker of the world, the divine Demiurge, so as to order the world in imitation of a transcendent model (Forms). In particular, mathematical structures are used (*Tim.* 35a–39e) to order the nature of the soul (both the World Soul and individual souls), as well as the four elements out of which the physical world is built (*Tim.* 53c–56c). Here it appears that

soul is related in its nature to mathematical objects. But what precisely is this relation?

We can also read, both in the *Republic* and in the *Timaeus*, mathematical passages of great complexity, in particular pages on the calculation of the 'nuptial number' in the *Republic* (VIII 546bc) and the account of the mathematical ordering of soul in the *Timaeus*. Such passages would require explanation from Proclus, whose teaching was based on a curriculum including these texts.<sup>4</sup> And the explanation would require the introduction of mathematical knowledge going beyond what is given in the enigmatic passages in Plato.

If Plato's texts provided the primary materials for reflection and teaching in Proclus' curriculum, Aristotle's works would have already been read and explained in the curriculum as preparation for reading Plato. In Aristotle, too, we can find much of interest on the subject of mathematics. In particular, in his *Metaphysics*, especially in books *A*, *Z*, *M*, and *N*, Aristotle provides an extensive attack on Pythagorean and Platonic ways of dealing with mathematical objects, criticizing them for confusing mathematical objects with natural substances (the Pythagoreans), or for separating them from these substances, as if they could exist independently, adding them to or even identifying them with the transcendent Forms of Plato. Aristotle's polemics are massive and difficult (he is attacking a range of views held by various Pythagoreans, Plato, and various members of Plato's Academy). Proclus could not ignore these texts and needed to relate them in some way to his interpretation of Plato.

Aristotle himself holds that mathematical objects do not exist independently of natural substances: they are the quantitative dimension of natural substances, considered in abstraction from other aspects of these substances. In this way, mathematics is subordinate, in terms of its objects, to the philosophy of nature (physics). However, Aristotle is not insensitive to the attractions of mathematics as an exact and rigorous science and places it as intermediate between physics and metaphysics (*Metaphysics E* 1) since it deals with immaterial objects (even if they do not exist separately from natural substances). He also defends the intrinsic value of mathematics against critics who denounced it as useless (*M* 3, 1078a31–b5) and is inspired by mathematical method, as he understood it, in developing a theory of scientific demonstration in the *Posterior Analytics*.

## 8.2. PROCLUS' SOURCES

In explaining and interpreting the canonical texts of Plato and Aristotle, Proclus could take advantage in the first place of the work of earlier commentators on these texts, in particular the commentaries of Porphyry and Iamblichus. Syrianus' *Commentary on the Metaphysics* was also useful in that it is

largely concerned with refuting Aristotle's criticisms of Pythagoreans and Platonists. In particular, Syrianus' arguments against the Aristotelian view that mathematical objects are abstracted from natural substances are taken over by Proclus (see section 8.4).

But Proclus also made use of sources outside the corpus of commentaries. In particular, he used and quoted the *Introduction to Arithmetic* by Nicomachus of Gerasa, a second-century AD author who identified his Platonism as Pythagorean. Proclus even considered himself to be a reincarnation of Nicomachus (Marinus, *V. Proc.* § 28). Nicomachus had been championed by Iamblichus as part of a programme to interpret Plato's philosophy as fundamentally of Pythagorean inspiration. Thus, Iamblichus provided, as part of his multi-volume work *On Pythagoreanism*, a commentary on (in fact a new version of) Nicomachus' *Introduction to Arithmetic* (volume IV of the work). A manual written by Nicomachus on harmonics may also have been used by Iamblichus, but both Nicomachus' text and the corresponding volume (VIII) of Iamblichus' synthesis are lost. We do not know what texts Iamblichus introduced for the study of geometry and astronomy (in volumes IX and X). At any rate, both Iamblichus' work and the manuals of which it made use could conveniently provide specific texts for the study of mathematics, texts not to be found in the available corpus of the works of Plato and Aristotle but which were clearly required by both the philosophy of Plato and that of Aristotle. Syrianus made extensive use of Iamblichus' *On Pythagoreanism* in his *Commentary on the Metaphysics* and we can take it that Proclus, who studied the *Metaphysics* with Syrianus, was familiar with Iamblichus' work. In particular, the first prologue of *in Eucl.* is, to a large extent, a reworking of volume III (*De comm. math.*) (see O'Meara 1989: 157–66). For geometry, Proclus made use of Euclid's *Elements*, in relation to which he could also benefit from the work of earlier commentaries or discussions, now largely lost, by Porphyry, Pappus, Plutarch of Athens, and Syrianus. A lost work by Ptolemy on geometry is quoted and criticized by Proclus (*in Eucl.* 362.14ff.; 365.7ff.). For harmonics, Proclus could use not only Nicomachus and Iamblichus but also Euclid, of whom he mentions an *Elements of Music* (*in Eucl.* 69.3), and Ptolemy, whose *Harmonics* had been commented on by Porphyry. For astronomy, Proclus could use Ptolemy's *Almagest* and *Hypotheses*, as well as the works of other astronomers, Pappus, for example, and Hilarius of Antioch (see section 8.8).

Finally, one might mention, as further sources of mathematical information which Proclus used in his *in Eucl.*, either directly or as reported in intermediate sources, Eudemus' *History of Geometry* (an invaluable source of information on the history of geometry compiled by a pupil of Aristotle, known to Proclus probably through Porphyry; see Zhmud 2006: 169–88) and Geminus, a first-century (?) AD writer mentioned fairly often by Proclus, of whom, however, Proclus names only one book, a *Philokalía* (*in Eucl.* 177.24). Proclus

also refers to the mathematical work of Apollonius of Perga and Archimedes, perhaps on the basis of earlier commentaries on Euclid. Proclus quotes from a work on astronomy by Carpus of Antioch (*in Eucl.* 241.18ff.), since lost, and no doubt had access, directly or indirectly, to other authors and texts in mathematics which no longer survive. Our knowledge of Proclus' sources for information on mathematics must therefore remain very incomplete, given that so many of them have not survived.

### 8.3. TEXTS

Proclus used Nicomachus' *Introduction to Arithmetic*, but we know of no commentary by him on this (as noted, Iamblichus had provided a commentary). However, Proclus' pupil Ammonius lectured on the manual of Nicomachus in Alexandria, these lectures being preserved as student notes by Asclepius and by John Philoponus. At any rate, it seems that Proclus considered that mathematics in general, as he presented it in the first prologue of his *Commentary on Euclid*, could be particularly well exemplified by geometry, since the second prologue, on geometry and its history, follows immediately on the first prologue and is followed by the treatment of Euclid's *Elements*. For geometry we can read this *Commentary on Euclid's Elements*.<sup>5</sup> Proclus considered Euclid to be a Platonist (*in Eucl.* 6.20–1) and thus thought that Euclid could be used as a text of Platonic geometry which could serve the transitional function, indicated in the image of the line in Plato's *Republic*, of leading the mind up towards dialectic, as well as providing explanations of difficult mathematical passages in Plato, in particular the mathematics of the *Timaeus* (*in Eucl.* 68.21–3; 384.2–4). The commentary following the two prologues covers book I of the *Elements*, going from the definitions, postulates and axioms at the head of book I up to Proposition 49. The commentary might have extended further (see *in Eucl.* 398.18–19), but Proclus probably did not comment on the whole of Euclid. We do not have a work on harmonics, but this science is used in various other works of Proclus, in particular in his *Commentary on the Timaeus* (see e.g. II 171.11ff.). Finally, for astronomy, we can still read his *Hypotyposis* which discusses and criticizes Ptolemy's astronomy and describes the making of an astrolabe.<sup>6</sup>

Apart from texts specifically written on the philosophy of mathematics (the first prologue of the *in Eucl.*), on geometry (the rest of the *in Eucl.*), and on astronomy, we can find in Proclus' other commentaries, in particular in those on the *Timaeus* and the *Republic*, many pages discussing the relation of mathematics to other sciences or introducing mathematical explanations of passages in Plato.<sup>7</sup>



## 8.4. WHAT ARE MATHEMATICAL OBJECTS?

What is mathematics about? Is it just about the quantitative attributes of natural substances? But mathematics does not seem to be about natural substances. Does it then presuppose another kind of object existing independently of natural substances, transcending them? These questions are raised, we have seen, when we read Plato's works and Aristotle's criticisms of Platonism. Proclus' approach to these questions<sup>8</sup> is inspired by an interpretation of Plato's *Timaeus*, the broad lines of which might be sketched as follows. Divine Intellect (or the 'Demiurge') produced the nature of soul in such a way as to constitute it from intelligible principles (*ousiôdeis logoi*), themselves derived from the transcendent Forms. These principles form a knowledge that is literally innate in the soul, given with the nature of soul, even if often remaining hidden, unconscious, unexamined. Mathematics starts from this innate knowledge, developing it on the level of articulated logical reasoning (discursive thought) in the form of concepts which are defined and propositions (axioms) which are stated. These first articulations of innate knowledge are then combined so as to deduce their consequences, i.e. the conclusions that can be derived from them. Mathematics is thus a 'projection' (*probolê*) in discursive thought of the innate knowledge of soul. Mathematical objects both constitute soul, as intelligible principles, and are constituted by soul, as the concepts, propositions, and arguments which soul elaborates (or 'unrolls', a favourite image) by rational methods from these principles.<sup>9</sup> The exemplary case of this for Proclus is geometry, where the geometer, as in Euclid, starts with concepts in the form of definitions and propositions, as starting points, and then develops them in deductions and constructions in a representational 'space' of the soul, in the faculty of *phantasia* (see Chapters 6 and 9 in this volume), which representations can be expressed in turn in the visual space of drawn diagrams.

If this theory of mathematical objects is not Proclus' creation (it seems to have its roots in Plotinus, it is suggested somewhat unclearly in Iamblichus' *De comm. math.*, and is stated in Syrianus' *Commentary on the Metaphysics*)—it certainly finds a clear and attractive presentation in the prologues of Proclus' *in Eucl.* It also involves important consequences, some of which might be noted here (others will be noted in the following sections).

A first consequence is that mathematics is an activity of the soul which allows the soul to think and explore the roots of its own nature: mathematics leads to self-knowledge. This is described by Proclus as follows:

So the soul, exercising her capacity to know, projects on the imagination (*φαντασία*), as on a mirror, the ideas of the [geometrical] figures, and the imagination, receiving in pictorial form these impressions of the ideas within the

soul, by their means affords the soul an opportunity to turn inward from the pictures and attend to herself. It is as if a man looking at himself in a mirror and marvelling at the power of nature and at his own appearance would wish to look upon himself directly...In the same way, when the soul is looking outside herself at the imagination, seeing the figures depicted there and being struck by their beauty and orderliness, she is admiring her own ideas from which they are derived.

(in *Eucl.* 141.4–17)

Mathematics is therefore an activity of the soul, an activity which articulates, projects, exteriorizes, so to speak, in discursive thought, what is innate and constitutive of soul, this activity leading also to an interiorization, a discovery and return to the constituents of soul. The dynamics of this activity, both outwards and inwards, has implications both for the understanding of the natural world in physics and for knowledge of transcendent divine beings, the sources of the constituents of the soul, in metaphysics (see section 8.7).

The function of mathematics in Plato as a means for transition to higher knowledge can be explained by this theory of mathematical thinking, since, if mathematics leads to self-knowledge in the soul, knowledge of the self also leads to knowledge of the origins of soul in transcendent divine beings. The ‘hypotheses’ of which Plato speaks in the *Republic* (see section 8.1) can be identified with the intelligible principles innate in soul as articulated in definitions and axioms. Some Platonist critics, Proclus notes (in *Eucl.* 29.14ff.), took Plato’s reference in the *Republic* to the deficiency of mathematics as resting on unsecured ‘hypotheses’ to be a rejection of mathematics’ claim to be a science. However, Proclus responds (30.8–32.2) by an appeal to the Aristotelian theory of subordinate sciences, i.e. sciences which receive their foundational truths from a higher science. So too does mathematics receive its starting points (concepts and axioms) from a higher science, the knowledge in divine Intellect, as mediated by the intelligible principles whereby soul is constituted.

Furthermore, the precision of mathematics, the necessary and universal truths achieved in mathematics, can be explained in that mathematics does not have an empirical basis, it does not derive its truths from the world of sense-perception, where imprecision, contingency, and particularity reign. Its truths are not, we might say, a posteriori: they are a priori in the sense that they rest on principles derived from the transcendent divine causes of the soul and of the world. This is essentially Proclus’ response, following Syrianus, to the Aristotelian theory of mathematical objects as abstractions from natural substances.<sup>10</sup> Such abstractions Proclus calls ‘later generated’ (*husterogenês*), empirically derivative. They cannot compete with the precision and universal validity of the truths of mathematics.

### 8.5. THE DISTINCTION BETWEEN THE MATHEMATICAL SCIENCES

Proclus took over from Iamblichus the distinction of the mathematical sciences into four: arithmetic, geometry, harmonics, and astronomy. However, in the first prologue of *in Eucl.*, he speaks of a general or total mathematics (*holê mathêmatikê*, 18.10) which is prior to the four specific mathematical sciences in the sense that it is a science comprehending the specific sciences (7.18–19; 9.24), being a science of the principles, methods, and theorems found generally throughout the specific sciences, even if specified for each science. Thus, for example, equality is found in specific forms in arithmetic and geometry, whereas general mathematics concerns equality prior to its specification as arithmetical or geometrical equality. Does this mean then that there is, prior to the four individual mathematical sciences, a general mathematics?

This appears to be the case in Proclus' source, Iamblichus' *De comm. math.*, which describes a 'common' or general mathematics distinct, on the one hand, from metaphysics (dialectic), and, on the other, from the particular mathematical sciences which depend on it (see Bechtle 2010). However, in his account of this general mathematics in *in Eucl.* (7.13–10.14, 18.10–20.7), Proclus does not seem to insist so much on this point and, significantly, adds to the Iamblichean passage he is adapting the indication that the general science from which the mathematical sciences derive their principles is the science of being, i.e. metaphysics.<sup>11</sup> However, this does not appear to mean that Proclus will go so far as to substitute metaphysics for Iamblichean general mathematics. Rather, metaphysics is the ultimate source of all mathematical knowledge, which includes both general mathematics and the specific mathematical sciences, as Proclus makes clear in another passage (43.25–44.14).<sup>12</sup>

As for these four specific sciences, Proclus, following Nicomachus and Iamblichus, distinguishes between them in terms of their objects (*in Eucl.* 35.17–36.12). These objects are distinguished into two kinds: discrete and continuous finite quantity, i.e. plurality and magnitude. Arithmetic deals with discrete quantity, plurality, i.e. numbers, whereas geometry deals with continuous quantity, magnitudes.<sup>13</sup> Two further distinctions, subordinate to the primary distinction, are then made: plurality in itself/in relation to another and magnitude at rest/in motion. These subordinate distinctions yield a further differentiation of the mathematical sciences into four. Thus, arithmetic studies numbers in themselves, harmonics numbers in relation to each other, geometry magnitude at rest, and astronomy magnitude in motion. We should note that the four mathematical sciences thus distinguished constitute a hierarchy:<sup>14</sup> arithmetic is the highest science as it deals with numbers in themselves; numbers can be developed in extension, constituting the magnitudes, i.e. figures, studied in geometry; the relations between numbers (proportions,

intervals) are examined in harmonics, whereas magnitudes brought into motion are the object of astronomy.<sup>15</sup>

Proclus relates this differentiation of the four sciences to the makeup of the soul, according to Plato's *Timaeus* (*in Eucl.* 36.12–37.26), so that it becomes clear that the objects differentiating the four sciences are in fact constituents of the nature of soul: soul is both one and many, a plurality (numbers) bound together by proportions (relations of numbers), a nature which abides the same while also producing motion.<sup>16</sup> We might add also that, as regards astronomy, it is the structure of soul, constituted from identity and difference articulated in a mathematical order, that produces the celestial movements.

Proclus mentions, furthermore (*in Eucl.* 38.1ff.), another division of the mathematical sciences, that of Geminus, in terms of their relation to intelligible or sensible beings. In this division, arithmetic and geometry appear as superior, since they deal with intelligible being, whereas astronomy appears as inferior as it concerns the visible heavens. Proclus does not comment on this second division. The first, Nicomachean, division could also be considered to range from intelligible to sensible beings. However, following a suggestion made in Plato's *Republic* (VII 530ab, 531c), we would need to distinguish between pure mathematical sciences, which deal with intelligible, transcendent principles only, and the mathematical sciences which are empirical, which deal with material realities, the objects of sense-perception. The higher mathematical sciences Proclus attributes to souls who transcend terrestrial existence (*in Tim.* I 41.21ff.). And so, as regards the two mathematical sciences inferior to arithmetic and geometry, we need to distinguish between harmonics, as a pure mathematical science dealing with numerical relations (proportions), and music, as dealing with sounds,<sup>17</sup> just as we need to distinguish between pure intelligible astronomy and an empirically derived study of the celestial bodies.<sup>18</sup>

## 8.6. THE METHODS OF MATHEMATICS

The particular mathematical sciences can be distinguished not only in relation to differences in their objects but also in relation to differences in method.<sup>19</sup> But they also share methods in common. In *in Eucl.* Proclus describes the methods generally characterizing mathematics as including analysis, synthesis, division, definition, and demonstration (42.20ff.), methods which mathematics derives from the higher science of dialectic. Proclus finds the same methods in geometry, describing them as follows:

The book [the *Elements*] contains all the dialectical methods: the method of division for finding kinds, definitions for intelligible principles, demonstrations

for proceeding from starting-points to what is sought, and analysis for passing in the reverse direction. (*in Eucl.* 69.14–19; see also 57.10–58.3)

As well as these methods common to the mathematical sciences, there are also methods specific to particular sciences. Proclus mentions, as regards geometry, in addition to proofs based on causes (demonstrations), proofs based on signs (on this see *in Eucl.* 206.19ff.), various forms of conversion (69.10–12 and 19; the forms are explained at 252.5ff.) and reduction to absurdity. These methods, however, might strike us as belonging more generally to logic. Indeed, Proclus tends to assimilate geometry and logic as if geometry exemplified the most rigorous form of logic, as if logic in its highest form is geometrical method. This assimilation probably comes from the idea that discursive reasoning, for Proclus, is found at its best in geometry. In contrast, the highest mathematical science, arithmetic, would tend more to a higher, more unified, non-discursive mode of thought.

The starting points (*archai*) of geometry (Plato's 'hypotheses') also differ from those of arithmetic.<sup>20</sup> Geometrical starting points feature at the beginning of Euclid's book as 'definitions', 'common notions', and 'postulates'. We find nothing comparable in Nicomachus' arithmetic. Proclus describes all three kinds of geometrical starting points as 'hypotheses', in the sense, it appears, that is indicated in Plato's *Republic*, i.e. as the undemonstrated truths from which geometry starts. Proclus furthermore identifies Euclid's 'common notions' as 'axioms' (see O'Meara 1989: 201) and explains the distinction between definitions (here named hypotheses), axioms, and postulates, referring to Aristotle (*Posterior Analytics* I 10), as being a distinction between truths known as evident and accepted by a *learner* (axioms), truths not known but accepted (hypotheses), and truths neither known nor accepted (postulates, *in Eucl.* 76.4–77.6). However, this explanation does not seem to concern the *geometer's* knowledge, who, Proclus later says (178.9ff.), must know the starting points of his science. Here Proclus distinguishes between axioms, as truths known as evident prior to demonstration, and postulates, as simple constructions preliminary to geometrical elaboration.<sup>21</sup> Ultimately, of course, geometrical starting points must have their roots in the intelligible principles (*ousiôdeis logoi*) innate in the soul (section 8.4), of which they are preliminary articulations.

Euclid's book also shows a difference in what the geometer elaborates on the basis of such starting points, a difference corresponding to the difference between axioms and postulates. Corresponding to axioms, the geometer develops theorems, and, corresponding to postulates, the geometer develops problems (*in Eucl.* 178.9–179.9). Theorems concern the demonstration of the properties of geometrical objects, whereas problems involve the construction of such objects in geometrical space (201.3ff.), theorems having a higher scientific value (243.12ff.) as being nearer to pure intelligible knowledge.

These two aspects of Euclidean practice correspond to two aspects of Proclus' interpretation of geometrical thinking: the demonstration of the consequences flowing from prior causes, and the activity of constructing figures in imagination from what is given to the mind.<sup>22</sup> Proclus, furthermore (203.1–5), analyses geometrical theorems and problems into six parts (enunciation, exposition, specification, construction, proof, conclusion). However, this analysis seems to reflect more a philosophical interpretation of Euclid in the light of a theory of science than the actual practice of Greek mathematicians (see Netz 1999).

Interesting methodological issues also come up in the *Hypotyposis*, where Proclus discusses the methods of empirical astronomy, in particular that of Ptolemy's *Almagest*. According to Proclus, astronomers such as Aristarchus, Hipparchus, and Ptolemy start from the principle that all celestial movements are ordered by Intellect (*Hyp.* I 8, 4.20–4). This principle, also described as a 'preconception' or hypothesis,<sup>23</sup> is true, as are the first principles of other sciences. However, the astronomers observed anomalies (*anômalia*) in the apparent (visible) movements of the heavens and, in order to regularize these movements, making them consistent with their first principle, thought up 'hypotheses', in particular those of eccentric and epicyclic circles. These 'hypotheses' (which we should distinguish from the hypothetical starting points of the sciences) are conceptual derivatives of sense-perception. They thus have the same epistemological status as the 'later generated' conceptual abstractions that Proclus elsewhere rejects in their claim to be scientific objects.<sup>24</sup> Proclus criticizes what he views as the methodological confusion of taking conceptual derivatives of sense-objects to be the *causes* of the movements of these objects (*Hyp.* VII 51–3, 236.17–25). And if these hypotheses are not conceptual derivatives but realities, then this ruins the regularity demanded by the astronomers' first principle (*Hyp.* VII 54, 236.25–238.8). The 'hypotheses' of the astronomers are thus not the true hypotheses (i.e. first principles) of the scientist who derives consequences from hypotheses, as effects are derived from causes, but are concepts fabricated (*plattein*) from consequences, i.e. from the visible movements of the heavens: the astronomers thus do things upside-down, they reverse the scientific order going from hypothesis to consequence (*Hyp.* VII 57, 238.17–20).<sup>25</sup>

## 8.7. THE RELATION BETWEEN THE MATHEMATICAL AND OTHER SCIENCES

The educational function of mathematics is to lead the soul to self-knowledge and from this self-knowledge to knowledge of its divine origins. Already in

exploring its innate principles, soul finds an image of these origins. This is what Proclus identifies as the 'Pythagorean' use of mathematical images as expressions of the divine (*in Eucl.* 21.25–22.16; *Theol. plat.* I 4). Thus, in arithmetic, the flow of numbers from the monad and the dyad to the subsequent numbers of the decad gives an image of the flow of all reality from first principles: a principle of unity and limitation, the monad, in which all numbers are implicitly pre-contained, and a principle of plurality and division, the dyad, both principles producing the following numbers of the series. So also, in geometry, does the line flow from the point (the geometrical equivalent of the monad), it is drawn back towards the point to form a circle,<sup>26</sup> line and circle producing in turn semi-circular and rectilinear figures (squares, oblongs, etc.), the whole progression of figures representing a cascade of levels of differentiation and multiplication of unity, expressing in geometrical figures the derivation of reality as a whole from divine first principles (see O'Meara 2005a).

Mathematics also prefigures and images the knowledge of divine principles in the sense that the science of the divine, 'dialectic', or 'theology' (a term taken over from Aristotle), is also a scientific articulation of innate concepts in the soul, expressed as propositions and combined in deductions. However, these concepts concern truths of a more fundamental nature than those of mathematics, universal truths concerning metaphysical first principles. Proclus' theory of metaphysical science, which he took over from Syrianus (see O'Meara 2011), seems to derive, historically, from the theory he follows of mathematics as a science. However, in the absolute, the reverse must be the case: mathematics is subordinate to, and derives from, metaphysics (dialectic or theology), just as the principles of mathematics derive from a higher knowledge. This subordination can be observed in the case of Proclus' famous *Elements of Theology*. Although it has often been said that this book is metaphysics 'done in the geometrical manner' (*more geometrico*), this is not accurate. If geometry starts from definitions and axioms (the 'hypotheses' of Plato's *Republic*), metaphysics does not: the *Elements of Theology* does not start with a list of definitions and axioms; it formulates propositions about first principles, which propositions are articulated by means of deductions of which they are the conclusions, the whole structure of propositions and deductions corresponding to the derivation of levels of being from first principles. The non-hypothetical, i.e. fundamental, character of metaphysics thus contrasts with the hypothetical, i.e. subordinate, character of mathematics.

Mathematics is pivotal as an image anticipating a higher science, metaphysics, and as a model illuminating lower levels of knowledge, physics, politics, ethics, and the arts (*in Eucl.* 21.25–25.15). As regards physics,<sup>27</sup> mathematics deals with the mathematical structures which order and regulate not only the movements of the celestial bodies, but also the processes of the natural world

in general. However, as Proclus makes clear in his *Commentary on the Timaeus*, there is an important difference between mathematics and physics, such that mathematics cannot simply be applied to physical questions.<sup>28</sup> Mathematics is the projection by the soul of its innate principles. These principles derive from the knowledge possessed by a divine Intellect which also orders the natural world, through the World Soul, according to the same knowledge. However, this ordering involves deficiencies and loss, due to matter and bodily conditions. If mathematics can illuminate the intelligibility of the natural order, it cannot replace an account appropriate to that order, physics.<sup>29</sup>

Mathematics, in the hierarchy of theoretical philosophy, comes between metaphysics and physics. Subordinate to theoretical philosophy are practical philosophy and the productive arts. As regards practical philosophy, politics and ethics, mathematics is important (*in Eucl.* 23.12–24.3) in regulating the life of the city, as prescribed by Plato in the *Republic* (the ‘nuptial number’!) and *Laws*. Mathematics can also produce order and harmony in our moral character (24.4–20), in particular through the influence of music: Proclus is again thinking of the *Republic* and *Laws*. He also mentions the *Gorgias*, where the cosmic and ethical importance of geometrical equality is proclaimed (508a). Elsewhere, in his *Commentary on the Republic* (I 56.20ff.), Proclus indicates that heard music, as an audible expression of harmonics, can affect the sub-rational parts of the soul and habituate them virtuously, just as the higher, purely intelligible music of harmonics can educate human reason.<sup>30</sup> Finally, the productive arts can also find in mathematics models of perfect order and measure (*in Eucl.* 24.21–25.11). Among these arts, Proclus mentions rhetoric, poetics, and all those skills that require counting and measuring (see Chapter 14).

## 8.8. PROCLUS AND THE MATHEMATICS OF HIS TIME

We know very little about mathematics in Proclus’ time. Some names survive, but little else. Proclus himself, as a young man, studied mathematics in Alexandria with Heron, a teacher described by Marinus (V. *Proc.* § 9.17–19) as pious and perfectly trained in Platonic mathematics. When Proclus moved to Athens, he studied under Syrianus with Domninus of Larissa, a fellow pupil and rival, who was considered by Damascius to be a skilled mathematician but an unorthodox Platonist.<sup>31</sup> A short *Manual of Introductory Arithmetic* by Domninus survives, which makes use of Nicomachus and of Euclid in a simple and clear account of number theory, mentioning an *Elements of Arithmetic* (not extant) which was destined to be of help also in reading Plato. Proclus, in his *Hypotyposis* (III 73, 76.22–3), refers to a work by Hilarius of Antioch,



where, he tells us, one can read, expressed with elegant concision, proofs that the hypothesis of eccentric cycles involves that of epicycles and vice versa. This Hilarius is probably the person whose story is told in Damascius' *Life of Isidore*, a decurion of Antioch who, late in life, wished to study philosophy with Proclus in Athens but was not accepted on account of his dissolute morals.<sup>32</sup> Damascius makes no mention of astronomy, his story serving only to illustrate the precondition of moral virtue for studying philosophy, but it is not unlikely that Proclus' (favourable) reference concerns the same Hilarius. In his *in Eucl.* (211.16) Proclus refers to another contemporary, Cratistus, as an example of natural intellectual talent in finding solutions in geometry, as compared to the use of method for finding these solutions. We know nothing else, as far as I know, about this Cratistus. Coming back to Proclus' circle, one could also mention Theodore the Engineer (*mechanikos*) to whom Proclus addressed his monograph *On Providence* and who had, it appears, mathematical training and interests in astronomy. Finally, one might mention, among Proclus' pupils, Ammonius, whose lectures on Nicomachus we have noted,<sup>33</sup> and, of course, Proclus' successor, Marinus, of whom we can still read a *prolegomenon* to the Euclidean *Data*, as well as comments on problems in Ptolemy's *Almagest* and in Pappus.<sup>34</sup> Marinus, who taught Damascius mathematics, is reported as having exclaimed (playing on the double meaning of the word *mathêma*) 'Would that all [studies, *mathêmata*] were mathematics!'<sup>35</sup>

## NOTES

1. *De comm. math.* 70.1–2; 71.18; 75.7. However, what Iamblichus appears to mean by this expression is a (first order) philosophical mathematics, not a (second order) philosophy of mathematics.
2. See Helbing (2000); Rabouin (2010). On the influence of Proclus' commentary in the Renaissance and in the scientific revolution of the early modern era, see Ch. 15 in this volume.
3. That is, music in its highest, purely mathematical form (for the term, see *in Eucl.* 34.16). 'Music' can also include more empirical subjects such as rhythm, sounds, heard music (see Ch. 14 in this volume), even sometimes meaning just 'education' (see Proclus, *in Remp.* I 56.20ff.). To avoid confusion, this chapter will refer simply to 'harmonics'. The term *mathêma* (*μάθημα*) can also be ambiguous since it can mean 'learning' in general as well as mathematics in particular (on this see d'Andrès 2010).
4. On the Neoplatonic curriculum, see Ch. 2 in this volume.
5. Morrow's English translation of *in Eucl.* is not always sufficiently precise and reliable; it will be quoted here with some modifications. Morrow introduces chapter divisions first made by Barozzi; here we refer to the page and line numbers of the Greek edition (Friedlein), the page numbers being found also in the margins of

Morrow's translation. A new critical edition of the Greek text, with a French translation, by C. Steel and A. Lernould, is in preparation.

6. On this, see Siorvanes (1996: ch. 5).
7. Proclus also refers in his *Commentary on the Timaeus* (*in Tim.* II 76.24) to an appendix (now lost) to his commentary which provided mathematical explanations.
8. See *in Eucl.* 15.16–18.4; 50.10–56.22. Proclus' theory of mathematical objects has often been described; see e.g. Mueller's 'Foreword' to Morrow's English translation of *in Eucl.* (1992); Cleary (2000); Lernould (2011).
9. The mathematical principles (*οὐσιώδεις λόγοι*) constituting soul are thus prior and not identical to the mathematical projections of the mathematician (*in Tim.* II 193.25–7). Thus, Proclus can reject earlier identifications of soul with arithmetical or geometrical entities (II 153.15–25; 154.10–15).
10. *In Eucl.* 12.2ff.; cf. O'Meara (1989: 159); Longo (2010). Mueller (1990) relates the abstractionism criticized by Syrianus and Proclus to the interpretation of Aristotle found in the great Aristotelian commentator of the second century AD, Alexander of Aphrodisias. Harari (2006) provides an excellent discussion of the difference between Aristotelian universals and the intelligible principles developed in geometry according to Proclus.
11. Compare *in Eucl.* 8.25ff. (the addition is at 9.17–19) with Iamblichus, *De comm. math.* 18.24ff.
12. In writing this paragraph I have been much helped by notes kindly sent to me by Alain Lernould.
13. Thus, geometry, in dealing with continuous magnitudes, has to do with objects which have position, have contact, and can include irrationals (continuous magnitude is infinitely divisible), which is not the case for arithmetic (*in Eucl.* 60.7–16).
14. Based on the criteria of the priority of the absolute (in itself) to the relative (in relation to another) and of the priority of rest to motion.
15. Arithmetic and geometry seem to be the highest mathematical sciences, geometry being inferior to arithmetic in having recourse to an additional faculty of soul, that of representation (*phantasia*), in expressing intelligible principles in extended form in representational space. However, harmonics, in dealing with the relations between numbers, does not seem to require the representational extension of geometry and thus seems in this respect at least to be closer to the discursive simplicity of arithmetic and of its object, numbers.
16. See also *in Tim.* II 238.12–239.10.
17. See O'Meara (2005b, 2007) and Sheppard (2005), who discusses the four kinds of 'music' distinguished by Proclus in *in Remp.* I 56.20–60.13. On this, see also Ch. 14 in this volume.
18. See *Hyp.* I 1–3, 2.1–13; Segonds (1987a: 165–7). Proclus invents the term *hyperastronomein* (*ὑπεραστρονομεῖν*), on the basis of an expression in Plato's *Theaetetus* (173e6), to designate higher astronomy.
19. In this section I have been able to integrate notes on geometrical method generously provided to me by Orna Harari. She is of course not responsible for any deficiencies in my account.

20. For the starting points of arithmetic see *in Eucl.* 184.14–15; *in Tim.* I 236.19.
21. See MacIsaac (2014), who also refers to 181.4–15. Proclus denies that the parallel postulate in Euclid (Postulate V) is a true postulate on the grounds that its necessary truth is the object of demonstration based on prior truths (191.21–5; Proclus refers to demonstrations by Euclid and by Ptolemy, 191.23–192.1; 361.11–363.18), even if at first it may appear to be plausible to the imagination. 'Imagination' here (*phantasia*, 192.8 and 25) appears not to be the representational space of the geometer.
22. See Harari (2008) on the important ways in which Proclus' interpretation of geometrical demonstration differs from Aristotelian demonstration.
23. *Hyp.* I 7, 4.15–16; II 18, 28.17; V 20, 146.7; cf. I 9, 4.25: a 'steady cable' (*πεῖσμα*; on this image elsewhere in Proclus see Martijn 2010a: 194 n. 130).
24. See section 8.4. Proclus uses the same term, *ἐπίνοια*, to designate the conceptual nature of the hypotheses of the astronomers (*Hyp.* VII 52, 236.20) and that of (Aristotelian) later-generated abstractions (*in Eucl.* 51.4–5).
25. See Siorvanes (1996: ch. 5) for a spirited defence of Proclus in terms of the observational given.
26. A circle can be described as a line moving around a fixed point at one of its ends (see *in Eucl.* 185.19–25); however, this line is limited in its extension and moves around the point as if tracing a line reverting, by means of a circular path, to the point (see *in Eucl.* 153.17–19; 155.8–9).
27. Proclus refers to this science as *φυσιολογία* in *in Tim.* and in *in Eucl.* (19.22), where he also speaks of *φυσικὴ θεωρία* (22.17); see Martijn (2010a: 1 n. 2), who argues (ch. 4) that Proclus' philosophy of nature has four phases ranging downwards from a theological to a mathematical, empirical, and biological physics. Analogous to mathematics and other sciences subordinate to dialectic, physics has starting points (definitions, hypotheses, axioms, common notions) and methods (definition, division, demonstration, analysis), whose specificity in physics is discussed by Martijn (2010a: 72, 76, 109, 132–6). Physics also distinguishes itself from mathematics in involving the cognitive faculty of *δόξα*, which mediates between the intelligible and the sensible (144–52).
28. On this, see the detailed discussion in Martijn (2010a: ch. 3).
29. Martijn (2010a: 166–204); Ch. 7 in this volume.
30. For discussion see O'Meara (2005b: 143–5) and Sheppard (2005: 148–9); for the interpretation of the music of Pythagoras as morally educational see also O'Meara (2007).
31. On Domninus see O'Meara (1989: 143–5) and Riedlberger's edn (2013).
32. Damascius, *V. Isid.*, Fr. 122; see Athanassiadi (1999b: no. 91, 227–9).
33. See section 8.3. Ammonius also lectured on Ptolemy.
34. The evidence is conveniently collected in Saffrey and Segonds' introduction to Marinus, *V. Proc.* (2001: pp. xxix–xxxix).
35. Saffrey and Segonds (2001: pp. xxxix and xxi). In preparing this chapter I have been much helped by the questions, suggestions, and notes provided by Orna Harari, Alain Lernoùd, Greg MacIsaac, Filip Karfik, Jan Opsomer, and the editors of this volume.

## Proclus on Epistemology, Language, and Logic

*Christoph Helmig*

### 9.1. INTRODUCTION

How does a late ancient Neoplatonist answer the pressing philosophical question of how we relate to the world around us by means of language and cognition? How does he conceive of the relation between words and things, and what role does language play in our apprehension of reality? Or, to put it differently, how does language link up with the things around us?

Before trying to answer these questions in more detail, I shall say a few words about what it meant to do philosophy and, more specifically, epistemology in the sixth century AD. Both in Athens and Alexandria, the two main intellectual centres at that time, to be a philosopher meant, first and foremost, introducing students to the classics, i.e. Plato and Aristotle, and commenting on a canonical selection of their works. In such a curriculum, Aristotle was read as an introduction to and preparation for Plato.<sup>1</sup>

The philosopher viewed as a commentator on Plato and Aristotle is a phenomenon that is worth reflecting upon briefly. It seems to entail, among other things, that (1) the philosopher/commentator devotes attention to the relation of the two philosophers concerning their main doctrines and that (2) he tries to make up his mind as to how a topic such as epistemology or ethics or ontology is treated in different works of one and the same author. To give an example, what is the relation between Plato's position in the *Theaetetus* regarding the definition of knowledge and his position in the *Meno* or the *Republic*? These questions are obviously not that different from the ones raised by Platonic scholarship as pursued nowadays.

There is, however, a major difference when it comes to questions of chronology and the doctrinal development of authors. Contemporary scholars usually distinguish between an early, middle, and late phase of Plato's literary

production. As far as Aristotle is concerned, several modern interpreters think, for instance, that his concept of *ousia* (essence or substance) changes from the allegedly earlier *Categories* to his *Metaphysics*. In the history of ancient and late ancient Platonism and Aristotelianism, instead, developmentalist accounts of Plato's and Aristotle's philosophy did not exist and the different works of an author were considered parts or building blocks of a larger philosophical project or system. To be sure, this did not preclude readers of Plato and Aristotle from distinguishing, whenever necessary, between different perspectives on whose basis a particular philosophical problem was tackled or between the different audiences (beginners, advanced learners, experts) an author was aiming at.

## 9.2. LOGIC, LANGUAGE, AND EPISTEMOLOGY

It goes without saying that all that has just been said ought to be taken into account when trying to understand Proclus' epistemology. To introduce the reader to the main features of Proclus' philosophy of logic, language, and epistemology, it is appropriate to raise a couple of questions that can serve as a guide for what follows. First, did Proclus already clearly distinguish the three different areas of philosophy? Second, what do the three domains have in common and what binds them together?

Let us start with the first issue. Already in the Old Academy we find clear traces of the well-known tripartition of philosophy into physics, ethics, and logic/dialectic.<sup>2</sup> About three centuries later, the Roman orator and Middle Platonic philosopher Cicero explains the domain of logic/dialectic (*peri tês logikês*, as some suggest, see Dörrie and Baltes 1996: 209, or rather *peri tês dialektikês*, *de disserendo*) as follows:

The third [sc. part of philosophy] deals with dialectic and with judgement of truth and falsehood, correctness and incorrectness, consistency and inconsistency, in rhetorical discourse. (Cicero, *Acad.* I 19; tr. Rackham)

Hence, for Cicero, as for the Stoics before him, 'logic' is much more comprehensive than what we nowadays term (formal) logic or syllogistic. It comprises *epistemology* and more specifically the question of the criterion of truth (*quid verum quid falsum*), *rhetoric* or how to deliver a speech (*quid rectum in oratione pravumve*), and *logic* in the proper sense of the word (*quid consentiens quid repugnet iudicando*).

In Alcinous' *Handbook of Platonism*, which is likewise of Middle Platonic origin, the third part of philosophy is called dialectics (*hê peri tôn logôn dialektikê*) and falls into four parts: division (*dihairesis*), definition, induction, and syllogism. This betrays the same tendency already found in Cicero, for

Alcinous' 'third part' of the domains of philosophy comprises much more than logic or syllogistic. Rather, logic was considered a subdomain of dialectic. The background for this broad understanding of dialectic is Plato's definition of dialectic as the highest form of science (*Resp.* VII 531d–534e).

Especially in late ancient commentators on Aristotle's *Organon* and Porphyry's *Isagoge* we find extensive discussions on whether logic is part of or merely an instrument of philosophy. The debate began with Stoic and Peripatetic philosophers. The former considered logic an integral part of philosophy, whereas the latter took it as a mere instrument or *organon*.<sup>3</sup> As far as the Platonic tradition is concerned, it was emphasized that Plato's highest science cannot, of course, be a mere *organon* (auxiliary or ancillary science). For instance, in *Ennead* I 3 [20] (*On Dialectic*), Plotinus argues that Platonic dialectic is the most valuable part of philosophy and that it must be distinguished from a science that operates by 'bare logical rules'.

But surely philosophy is the most valuable thing? Or are dialectic and philosophy the same? It is the valuable *part* (μέρος τὸ τίμιον) of philosophy. For it must not be thought to be a tool (ὄργανον) the philosopher uses. It is not just bare theories and rules (ψιλὰ θεωρήματα καὶ κανόνες); it deals with things and has real beings as a kind of material for its activity; it approaches them methodically and possesses real things along with its theories. It knows falsehood and sophism incidentally, as another's product, and judges falsehood as something alien to the truths itself, recognizing, when anyone brings it forward, something contrary to the rule of truth. So it does not know about propositions—they are just letters—but in knowing the truth it knows what they call propositions...

(Plot., *Enn.* I 3 [20] 5.7–19; tr. Armstrong, slightly modified)

Proclus' pupil Ammonius reads the by then old quarrel on the status of logic/dialectic within the discipline of philosophy as a contrast between two kinds of dialectic. And he attributes these two respectively to Plato and Aristotle.

First, one ought to know that Aristotle and Plato have a different concept of dialectic. Aristotelian dialectic follows from opinions in five ways, as he has laid out in the *Topics* [cf. *Top.* VI 1, 139a24]. Plato's doctrine of dialectic proceeds according to four ways: division, definition, demonstration, and analysis.

(Amm., in *Porph. Isag.* 34.17–20)

In his *Commentary on the Prior Analytics*, Ammonius is eager to emphasize that Aristotle was not the first to use syllogistic arguments—Plato already did this in his dialogues. But Aristotle can be credited with the discovery of the three syllogistic figures.<sup>4</sup> In the same commentary we find traces of the aforementioned debate on whether logic was a part or an instrument of philosophy. In accordance with Ammonius' general tendency to reconcile Plato and Aristotle, he argues that Plato himself already considered logic/dialectic *both* an instrument and a part of philosophy. This entails a distinction between at least two parts of dialectic.

[A]ccording to Plato and true reason, logic is neither a part, as the Stoics and some of the Platonists say, nor is it solely an instrument, as the Peripatetics say, but it is both a part and an instrument of philosophy. For if you consider arguments along with their objects—for instance, syllogisms themselves along with their objects that underlie them [sc. the content of the logical terms]—logic is a part; if, however, [you consider them] as empty schemata without their objects, it is an instrument.

So, Peripatetics do well to attend to Aristotle's remarks and say that logic is an instrument. For he puts forward empty schemata, considering not the underlying objects but applying the schemata to letters: 'A [holds] of every B, B of every C, therefore A of every C', for example.

Plato, however, uses logic as both a part and an instrument, for when he applies these schemata to objects and uses syllogisms upon objects, when, for instance, he says, 'the soul is a self-mover, the latter is eternally moving, the latter is immortal, therefore the soul is immortal', then, in using logic along with the objects that underlie it, he uses it as a part. When, however, he puts forward only deductive methods, i.e. empty schemata without objects, he uses logic as an instrument.

(Amm., in *An. pr.* 10.36–11.14; tr. Flannery in Sorabji 2004b: ii. 35, slightly modified)<sup>5</sup>

The notion of two kinds of dialectic (a higher and a lower) can already be found in Ammonius' teacher Proclus, in, for instance, his *Commentary on the Parmenides* (see Lernould 1987). In his *Commentary on the Cratylus*, we find the same distinction, already familiar from Plotinus, in terms of Aristotelian logic and Platonic dialectic. Compared to Ammonius, however, there is much more of an anti-Aristotelian ring in Proclus. This accords with a general tendency in Syrianus and Proclus to criticize Aristotle openly and to emphasize rather than cover up the differences between Plato's most prominent pupil and his master.<sup>6</sup>

That the *Cratylus* is logical and dialectical, not, however, in the manner of Peripatetic dialectical methods, which are unrelated to reality, but in the manner of the great Plato. The latter knew that dialectic fits only those with a perfectly purified thinking faculty/mind, educated in mathematics, purified from the juvenile features of their characters through the virtues, those, in short, who have truly worked on philosophy. This sort of dialectic is said by him to be the 'capstone of mathematics' (*Resp.* VII 534e) and to lead us upwards to the one cause of all things, the Good, and 'to have been brought to humanity from the gods by Prometheus together with the brightest fire' (cf. *Phil.* 16c). For the analytical method of the Peripatos, and its main part, demonstration, are easy to master and very clear for everybody who is not completely confused and has not drunk much water from the river Lethe.

(Proclus, in *Crat.* § 2, 1.10–2.4; tr. Van den Berg 2008: 136, slightly modified)

What is remarkable about this text is the fact that the *Cratylus* is considered a dialogue on *dialectic*. In the Neoplatonic curriculum, first introduced by Iamblichus of Chalkis, the *Cratylus* belonged to a group of Platonic dialogues

that deal with the interrelation of language, thought, and reality (such as the *Theaetetus*, *Sophist*, *Statesman*). From Proclus' exegesis, it becomes clear that the philosophy of language was by no means considered independently, as an isolated discipline. Rather, language is the expression of inner mental thoughts or concepts that, in turn, depend on the intelligible Forms.<sup>7</sup>

[The *Cratylus*] presents the principles of reality (*ἀρχαὶ τῶν ὄντων*) and of dialectic, when he presents the names together with the things of which they are names.  
(Proclus, in *Crat.* § 8, 3.4–6; tr. DuVick, slightly modified)

In sum, Proclus follows the Platonic tradition before him in not drawing clear boundaries between logic, epistemology, and the philosophy of language. Rather, grouping all three issues under the domain of dialectic, he moreover makes their study inseparable from ontology, understood as the knowledge of real being, i.e. the Forms. Hence, the discipline of logic has a much broader scope than what we currently understand as formal logic. It comprises the philosophy of language and epistemology.

Although dialectic is much more important than formal logic within the philosophy of Proclus, our Neoplatonist also contributed to the late ancient systematization of the Aristotelian *Organon*; and it is this rather interesting contribution to which we shall now turn.

### 9.3. PROCLUS AND THE ARISTOTELIAN SYLLOGISTIC

As we have seen, Proclus and his pupil Ammonius consider logic to be both a part and an instrument of philosophy. Such a view, which is prefigured in Plotinus, relies on a distinction between logic understood as applying logical rules according to the model of Aristotle's *Prior* and *Posterior Analytics* and logic seen as dialectic (the highest Platonic science). It is true that, especially in Proclus' treatment of the distinction, he seems to have little esteem for syllogistic techniques of inference. But this is certainly misleading, and in what follows I shall say something on the more technical aspects of Proclus' reception of Aristotelian logic.

It goes without saying that the Neoplatonist was steeped in Aristotelian logic and syllogistic. Already as a young man, as we learn from his biographer Marinus of Neapolis, Proclus knew all of Aristotle's logical writings (i.e. the *Organon*, comprising the *Categories*, *On Interpretation*, the *Prior* and *Posterior Analytics*, the *Topics* and the *Sophistical Refutations*) by heart. This episode goes allegedly back to the time when he studied at Alexandria under a certain Olympiodorus, an otherwise unknown rhetor and teacher of philosophy.

Apart from his early interest in Aristotle, another important episode of Proclus' life is worthy of being reported here. Upon his arrival in Athens and



after a short period of studies under Plutarch of Athens, Marinus tells us that Proclus and Syrianus read together all of Aristotle's works in less than two years (after Plutarch had died in 430/431). This piece of information is most useful since it shows that Syrianus and Proclus, who shared a rather similar and at times openly critical approach towards Aristotle, had actually worked their way through his works in constant discussion.

Proclus' astounding knowledge of Aristotelian philosophy and, more specifically, Aristotelian logic is also reflected in the fact that we have traces of commentaries on the whole *Organon* and on Pophyry's *Isagoge*.<sup>8</sup> The latter was read in late antiquity as an introduction to Aristotle's logic.

That said, it becomes apparent that Proclus had a special interest in Aristotle's logical writings. Here I want to focus on two aspects of his use and reception of Aristotle's syllogistic in his philosophy. The first is characteristic of most, if not all, Neoplatonic commentators on Plato's dialogues. I have in mind the way a commentator uses syllogisms to formalize arguments that are employed in discussions between Socrates and his interlocutors. Such a practice can be observed in great detail in Proclus' *Commentary on the Alcibiades* as well as his other commentaries. The second is much more specific when it comes to Proclus' special interest in the more technical aspects of Aristotelian syllogistic. From Ammonius' and Stephanus' *Commentary on On Interpretation*, we can gather that Proclus developed a technical rule/technical rules (*kanôn/kanones*) capturing the consequence of relations between certain affirmative and negative propositions.

In all of Proclus' commentaries on Plato, the use of syllogisms in his exegesis is particularly prominent. According to his *Commentary on the Alcibiades*, the whole dialogue is structured according to ten syllogisms. The *Commentary on the Cratylus*, on the other hand, contains a whole section (section 46) that presents Plato's text as a series of syllogisms (see Van den Berg 2008: 118–21). R. van den Berg (2008: 119) comments on this as follows:

[The] procedure of clarifying a text by reworking it into a series of syllogisms is common in the ancient commentators on Aristotle, who himself had already recommended it as an exercise (*γυμνασία*, see Aristotle, *Top.* 164a12–b7). . . . The main function of this exercise was to test the original argument.

Apart from these examples from Proclus, we find many other examples of Neoplatonists employing Aristotle's syllogistic to explain Plato or Aristotle himself, such as Olympiodorus' and Damascius' commentaries on the *Phaedo* or Simplicius' commentaries on the *Physics* and on the *De caelo*.<sup>9</sup> It goes without saying that all these thinkers were well versed in Aristotelian logic and his doctrine of the three syllogistic figures. What is more, they were also indebted to Stoic logic.

A further important testimony that Proclus was not only interested in Platonic dialectic as the highest science but also in Aristotelian logic comes

from the ancient commentary tradition on Aristotle's *De interpretatione* (ad X, 20a20–3). Some Greek and Arabic commentators ascribe to Proclus a rule/rules (*kanôn/kanones*) known as the 'Canon(s) of Proclus' on how to transform (*metatithenai*) a proposition into an equivalent one by means of negations.

Chapter 10 of *On Interpretation* deals with negations and negative terms such as 'not-man'. In this context, Proclus distinguishes between different so-called quantities and qualities of a proposition. While the quality of a proposition can be either negative or affirmative, the quantity can be indeterminate ('man is just'), universal ('every man is just'), or particular ('some man is just'). Thus, altogether, we have six different types of sentences.<sup>10</sup>

The 'Canon(s) of Proclus'—the expression can be found in Ammonius (in the plural), Stephanus (in the singular), Al-Farabi, and in an anonymous Syrian *Commentary on On Interpretation*<sup>11</sup>—concerns the logical relations between these six types of propositions. As presented by Stephanus of Alexandria (in *De int.* 49.24–35), the canon states that if one wants to know what logically follows from a given proposition, one should (a) leave the subject term and the quantity of the proposition as it is but (b) change the quality (from affirmative to negative or vice versa) and the predicate of the proposition (from 'A' to 'not-A' or vice versa). Stephanus adds that the proposition that results from this transformation is *equivalent* to the original proposition.<sup>12</sup>

I shall provide two examples to illustrate how the Proclean 'Canon(s)' can be applied. Let us take the sentence 'Every A is B'. Regarding its quantity, the sentence is universal ('every A'); regarding its quality, it is affirmative. According to the canon, the new proposition is 'No A is not-B' (change in the quality and predicate of the proposition). Second, let us take the sentence 'Some A is B'. According to the canon, this results in 'Not every A is not-B' (once again, we change the quality of the whole proposition and the predicate).

The rule given by the 'Canon(s) of Proclus' later came to be known as 'the rule of obversion' and played an important role in medieval discussions of Aristotle's syllogistic. From the name of this rule employed both by Proclus' pupil Ammonius and Stephanus of Alexandria (i.e. 'Canon(s) of Proclus'), we may infer that it was indeed Proclus of Athens who first formulated it. If this is true, we are in a position to attribute a formidable achievement in the field of formal logic to our Neoplatonist.

#### 9.4. NAMING AND KNOWLEDGE

As we have just seen, Proclus considers Plato's *Cratylus* to be a dialogue dealing with Platonic dialectic. Such a reading is based on an important

premise, i.e. the strong interconnection of language and its objects. Unlike several modern scholars, the Neoplatonist does not think that the *Cratylus* and its discussion on the correctness of names is about language *tout court*. Since, for him, language refers primarily to the Platonic Forms, what we have is a kind of theory of ideal language. Consider the following quote:

[T]he names that we use will be suitable primarily to Forms (ἐκείνοις), not to things that contain a considerable mixture of opposites, such as white with black, equal with unequal, and all the like.

(Proclus, in *Parm.* IV 852.17–22;  
tr. Van den Berg 2008: 86, slightly modified)

Against this background, Proclus attributes an important task to names in his science of dialectic. And he finds warrant for this in the *Cratylus* himself.

Therefore, the name is an instrument (ὄργανον) that instructs (διδασκαλικόν) and (καί) distinguishes (διακριτικόν) essence (οὐσίας) as the shuttle does the web.<sup>13</sup>

(Plato, *Crat.* 388c; tr. Duvick 2007)

In his exegesis of the passage, Proclus distinguishes clearly between two aspects and functions of names, i.e. teaching and dividing, but ultimately connects them again.<sup>14</sup> For him, a name is first of all an instrument to instruct and reveal the essence (of a thing). This is the teaching moment:

For it [sc. the name] is ‘an instrument that is instructive and revelatory of the essence’ of things. (Proclus, in *Crat.* § 48, 16.12–13; tr. Duvick)

Its dihairetic or discriminative function is characterized as follows:

For every instrument has been designed in relation to its proper function, and may not be suited to any other thing than that for which it has been produced. So also the name, because an instrument, has a certain connate power that is adapted to the objects that it signifies. Since it instructs it has a task of revealing the objects of intellection; and, since it discriminates essence, it implants in us an understanding of things. The argument from the form of the name is the same, just as the preceding was from the model, that is, the object.

(Proclus, in *Crat.* § 48, 16.19–27; tr. Duvick)

If he has now called the name both an ‘instructive’ [*Crat.* 388bc] and a ‘dialectical’ [*Crat.* 390d] instrument, it is clear that the dialectician is a teacher.

(Proclus, in *Crat.* § 61, 26.19–21; tr. Duvick, slightly modified)

The penultimate passage has aptly been compared to a text in the *Commentary* on Plato’s *Timaeus* (II 255.12–24), where it is said that true names aim at the nature of things.<sup>15</sup> Taken as such, Proclus’ view on language and the structure of reality presupposes what Plato explicates at some length in the *Phaedrus*.<sup>16</sup> The dialectician can be compared to a good cook who knows how to divide a piece of meat according to the joints (between the bones), that is, he cuts the meat in a natural way without breaking the bones (*Phdr.* 265e). The

analogy of the good and bad cook, which was frequently invoked by Neoplatonic authors,<sup>17</sup> illustrates the practice of the philosopher, namely, to recognize the 'joints of nature', i.e. how reality is formally structured or what the causal principles (Forms) of the sensible world are.

All Neoplatonic theories of knowledge agree that reality as such can be known and that it can be known according to its causes. This Aristotelian requirement of knowledge has received a thoroughly ontological interpretation in Neoplatonism. We will come back to it in the section on epistemology and the soul.

Returning to Proclus' theory of language, we are now in a position to better understand how language relates to reality. As we have seen, names signify first and foremost unchanging, intelligible entities. Such a reading is further warranted by a passage from Proclus' *Commentary on the Alcibiades*:

[I]n the *Cratylus* Socrates says that the names of the eternal things rather touch on the nature of these things, whereas the names of things that become and perish change in many ways and are to a high degree the product of convention because of the unstable movement of the objects to which they refer.

(Proclus, in *Alc.* 22.13–18; tr. Van den Berg 2008: 115)

This text, as it stands, introduces another crucial feature of Proclus' theory of language. At first sight, it is not easy to see how, in discussing the question whether names are by nature or by convention, one may speak of *degrees* of convention. According to Proclus, however, this is possible because a name consists of form and matter, and the greater the material element, as it were, the greater the degree of convention.<sup>18</sup> This is especially the case with names of individuals since the latter do not participate in a transcendent Form (for there are no Forms of individuals, according to most Neoplatonists).<sup>19</sup>

But what are names exactly? What distinguishes them from trees or animals? The ontological status of names or language in Neoplatonism is intriguing. Could they be (purely) mental entities? As far as I know, Proclus nowhere answers this question explicitly. It can be excluded, however, that names exist only in the human soul (as mere concepts) since the Neoplatonist describes an elaborate theory of divine language.<sup>20</sup> Another argument against a conceptualist reading of names is the dominant ontological aspect of Proclus' approach to language. We have seen that names are composites of form and matter. What are the ontological implications of the formal aspect of names? Are the different levels of names somehow comparable to the different levels of forms? That the analogy between forms and names/words is far-reaching is warranted by at least three observations. (1) The Greek word *λόγος* (*logos*) means both word and form (reason-principle). (2) As we have seen, names refer primarily to Platonic Forms. In their formal aspect, they can be said to be images of Forms; in the same way, language is an image of psychic concepts (*logoi*) that are, in turn, images of the transcendent Forms (Van den

Berg 2008: 198). (3) It can be concluded from Proclus' *Commentary on the Timaeus* that the Neoplatonists suggest linking the universal demiurgy to uttering words (*logoi*).<sup>21</sup>

For he himself [sc. the demiurge] begins first with the creation of these [i.e. *logoi*] as well, and he creates them by means of speaking only—for the words of the Father are the demiurgical thoughts and his thoughts are acts of creation. And he leaves the subsequent creation to the many [sc. the younger gods].

(Proclus, in *Tim.* III 222.2–5; tr. Van den Berg 2008: 144)<sup>22</sup>

Moreover, we can, I submit, draw an analogy between language and concepts in the soul. Late ancient commentators on the *Categories* agree that Aristotle's work was a treatise about words that signify things (*pragmata*) through thoughts (concepts). Language presupposes concepts (*ennoiai*) (see Ammonius, in *Cat.* 9.17–25). As we shall see later in the chapter, the essence of the human soul consists of *logoi*, and these *logoi* can be considered, in modern terminology, (inner mental) concepts.<sup>23</sup>

The link between concepts and language forms the basis of the whole of Proclus' *Commentary on the Cratylus*, and it can be well illustrated by an important text from the *Commentary on the Timaeus*:

The *logos* of things is akin to these things and as it were an offspring of these. For it [sc. the *logos*] is the result of knowledge in us which corresponds to the things (*ἀποτελείται γὰρ ἐκ τῶν ἐν ἡμῖν γνώσεων τῶν συστοίχων τοῖς πράγμασι*).

(Proclus, in *Tim.* I 341.18–21; tr. Van den Berg 2008: 116, modified)<sup>24</sup>

The link between our concepts and our language, I take it, is the most important warrant for the strong interconnection between Proclus' epistemology and theory of language. The idea goes back as far as Plato's *Sophist*, where two kinds of *logos* are distinguished (see *Soph.* 263e and *Tht.* 206d). This distinction became a matter of terminology in Stoicism, where it is put in terms of the opposition between an inner *logos* (*logos endiathetos*) and the spoken word (*logos prophorikos*). Platonists also call the spoken word an image of the inner *logos*.<sup>25</sup>

In line with contemporary philosophers who have done work on concepts, Proclus observes that there are important differences when it comes to the mastery of these concepts.<sup>26</sup> To take a modern example, most people are able to recognize the sun, but only a trained astronomer can explain the nature of the sun and its relation to other parts of the universe. To put it in Proclean terms, the majority of people know only the 'that' (*hoti*). They have factual knowledge of the object in question and cannot give an account of it. Only the experts know the 'why' (*dihoti*) and are able to provide an explanation. Interestingly, the same distinction reappears on the level of language.

In a most interesting digression on the different senses of *hellenizein* ('to speak Greek', in *Alc.* 258.21–259.21),<sup>27</sup> Proclus observes that most people

know how to name the things around them correctly. The philosopher, however, is also able to connect the appropriate words with the nature of things. In between the philosopher and the everyman stands the 'grammarian' who knows how the Greek language is spoken and pronounced accurately. The way the everyman and the philosopher deal with language reflects the distinction between factual knowledge and knowledge of the causes in the *Commentary on the Timaeus*.

Proclus' theory of the correctness of names does not, of course, imply that correct names can only be used in a correct way. Rather, we ought to distinguish between names that are by nature correct because they have the capacity to reveal the essences of things and the way these names are used by ordinary people and philosophers.

### 9.5. EPISTEMOLOGY AND THE SOUL

In Neoplatonism, knowledge as such is never considered an end in itself.<sup>28</sup> Rather, acquiring knowledge is seen as a part of the soul's purification and ascent, during which the contemplative life is only the penultimate stage of perfection. The ultimate goal of a philosophical life is likening oneself to the divine (*homoiôsis theôi kata to dunaton*, Plato, *Tht.* 176a–b). For Syrianus and Proclus, this ultimate step can only be achieved by means of theurgy.<sup>29</sup>

Proclus' epistemology is based on several ontological and gnoseological presuppositions that are, I take it, more or less common ground in later, i.e. post-Porphyrian Neoplatonism. Differences arose mainly due to how different philosophers saw the relation between Plato and Aristotle. For instance, while Iamblichus and Simplicius did not seem to have read Aristotle's criticism of Plato's theory of Forms as pointing to a fundamental disagreement between the two philosophers, Syrianus and Proclus usually emphasize Aristotle's deviations, as it were, from Platonic orthodoxy.

The acquisition of knowledge or, more generally, the activities of the different faculties of the human soul are part of the ascent that ultimately leads to union with the first principle. Neoplatonic approaches to epistemology are characterized by means of a specific kind of teleology. Already in Plotinus, for instance, we find the assertion that 'sense-perception wants to be knowledge' (*Enn.* VI 7 [38] 29.25–6).

While the faculties of the soul are studied strictly from the bottom-up in Aristotle's *De anima*, starting with sense-perception—the presupposition being that the higher faculties build upon the activity of lower ones—Proclus' view is diametrically opposed to that.<sup>30</sup> He develops a psychology that is top-down, where the lower faculties proceed from the higher ones.<sup>31</sup> For instance, intellect is taken to be the paradigm of *phantasia* (imagination) and *dianoia*

(discursive reason) that of *doxa* (opinion, judgement). Crucial for the Neoplatonic approach to epistemology is the contrast between the rational and the non-rational part of the soul. Strictly speaking, only faculties of the rational soul (*doxa*, *dianoia*, *nous*) can be called *criteria* of truth because they are able to judge, by means of innate principles or standards of the soul (*logoi*), whether something is true or false.<sup>32</sup>

We know from Proclus and Ammonius that, in solving the problem of divine foreknowledge or, more generally, god's knowledge of the world, Iamblichus introduced an important new principle in late ancient epistemology, namely, the axiom that the form of knowledge is not determined by the object known but by the knower. Iamblichus' principle, as it could be called, has important and, until now, not fully explored consequences. It provides, first of all, an explanation of how a god can know the physical world and the things it contains, despite the constant flux of the sensible, without undermining human free will. That is to say, god's foreknowledge does not determine the sequence of events in our world because it transcends discursivity and time. According to the Iamblichean principle, god knows the world in a divine way, that is,

every god has an undivided knowledge of the things divided and a timeless knowledge of things temporal; he knows the contingent without contingency, the mutable immutably, and in general all things in a higher mode than belongs to their station (τάξις). (Proclus, *El. theol.* § 124; tr. Dodds)

Another remarkable consequence of Iamblichus' principle is that even *doxa* (opinion, judgement) has access to the Forms: it grasps them in a doxastic way (*doxastikôs*).<sup>33</sup> In modern scholarship on Plato, the question is often raised as to whether the intelligible Forms play a role in the way *doxa* cognizes the world.<sup>34</sup> In short, is there *doxa* of the Forms? Most of the time, any relation between *doxa* and the intelligibles is considered to be beyond the faculty's reach, for, according to Plato (and Aristotle), scholars claim, knowledge is determined by its objects. The principle of Iamblichus contradicts such a claim and offers an innovative reading of Platonic epistemology.

Contrary to Aristotle and the Stoics, Neoplatonists are convinced that the soul is not an empty writing tablet (*tabula rasa*). Accordingly, especially in Syrianus and Proclus, we find an elaborate critique of more empirical forms of the acquisition of universal knowledge such as abstraction, induction, or collection. A major part of this critique takes its point of departure from the defective nature of sensible entities. It is assumed that, if, say, abstraction is based on the latter, its results cannot be more perfect than the sensibles themselves.<sup>35</sup> Hence, abstracted concepts are by definition imperfect.

It is against this background that the question arises as to how mathematical come into being and what their ontological status is. In Syrianus and Proclus, the criticism of abstracted concepts applies to mathematical as well.

But how do they originate then? The Neoplatonic view that mathematical or geometrical objects originate because they are 'projected' (*proballein* and the noun *probolê*) by reason into *phantasia* can be traced back to Iamblichus (sometimes, this is referred to as 'projectionism').<sup>36</sup> On such a view, mathematical entities depend on higher causes (i.e. the Forms or Form-Numbers) and are, on the level of their manifestation in geometry, compounds of forms and intelligible matter (also called *hulê phantastikê* and not to be confused with Plotinus' concept of a matter constitutive of the Forms themselves). The Iamblican theory of the origin and ontological status of mathematical finds its most detailed exposition in Syrianus' largely anti-Aristotelian *Commentary on the Metaphysics* and Proclus' prologues to his *Commentary on Euclid's Elements*.<sup>37</sup> As with other forms of knowledge, mathematics is not an end in itself but is compared to a ladder that purifies the soul and leads it upwards towards self-knowledge and perfection.

That the human soul is always equipped with innate concepts (called *logoi* by the Neoplatonists) was seen to be taught in Plato's *Timaeus* as far back as Alcinous' *Handbook of Platonism*:

For since it is with the soul that we discern (*κρίνειν*) each among existent things, it is reasonable that he [sc. the demiurge] should have incorporated in it the first principles (*ἀρχαί*) of all things (*ἀπάντων τῶν ὄντων*), in order that, perceiving each of the things which fall under our notice by virtue of what is akin to it and like it, we should realize that the essence of the soul is in conformity with its activity. (Alc., *Didasc.* XIV, 169.18–22; tr. Dillon)<sup>38</sup>

Inspired by the Stoic theory of the *logos* and the *logoi spermatikoi* that give form to the natural world as well as its Middle Platonic adaptations (for instance, in Philo or Plutarch), Platonists from Plotinus and Porphyry onwards held that the innate content of the soul consists of *logoi*.<sup>39</sup> They constitute the essence of the soul and are not contained in it as in a vessel. This is why Proclus chooses to call them *essential* reason-principles (*logoi ousiôdeis*).

The *logoi* are part of an ontological hierarchy of Forms of which the most important are the transcendent Forms, the *logoi* in the soul, and the *logoi* or forms in things/forms in matter (sometimes referred to as *enhula eidê*).<sup>40</sup> Platonists put great emphasis on the fact that the different levels of this hierarchy do not merely exist side by side in isolation from one another, but are connected according to an *analogia entis*.<sup>41</sup> In Proclus' philosophy, the Middle Platonic analogy of being is interpreted in such a way that every level of reality mirrors reality as a whole: 'All things are in all things, but in each according to its proper nature' (*El. theol.* § 103).<sup>42</sup> Already in Plato's *Timaeus*, we find the suggestion that the structure of the ensouled *kosmos* is mirrored somehow in the human soul (relation of macrocosm and microcosm). Furthermore, in his *Commentary on the Timaeus*, Proclus emphasizes that the



soul as mediator par excellence between the immaterial and material can be considered both paradigm and image: paradigm for the sensible world and image of the intelligible world.

Accordingly, it [sc. every soul] pre-embraces all sensible things after the manner of a cause (*κατ' αἰτίαν*), possessing the reason principles (*τοὺς λόγους*) of material things immaterially, of bodily things incorporeally, of extended things without extension; on the other hand it possesses as images the intelligible principles...

(Proclus, *El. theol.* § 195; tr. Dodds, slightly modified)<sup>43</sup>

The principle 'all things in all things' is especially crucial for the thesis that in knowing its own *logoi*, the soul obtains true knowledge of reality, knowledge according to causes. According to Neoplatonic doctrine, the world soul produces everything that comes after it by means of internal reason-principles (*logoi*). Since all rational souls contain these very same *logoi*,<sup>44</sup> every human soul contains in itself all principles of reality. Most people are not aware of this, however, since souls forget about their interior knowledge in the process of being embodied. Hence, the soul has to *recollect* what it has forgotten. The history and development of Neoplatonic epistemology can also be considered a long and very interesting attempt to systematize what Plato had already termed *recollection* (*anamnesis*). This systematization was mostly developed against the background of a close and highly innovative reading of the Platonic dialogues, especially the *Theaetetus*, *Timaeus*, and *Republic*.

Recollection, then, lies at the basis of the whole Neoplatonic theory of knowledge. And in Proclus it has three main elements, namely, forgetting, articulation (*diarthrōsis*), and putting forth (*probolē*), which may be called the 'triad of recollection' (see Helmig 2012: 272–99). The result of the process of forgetting is, to use a common Neoplatonic metaphor, that the *logoi* are covered over, that is, we are no longer able to grasp them.

While Middle Platonists identify *what remains* of our initial knowledge after the incorporation of the soul with the soul's innate knowledge, Neoplatonists distinguish between this innate knowledge (the *logoi*) and our *awareness* of it. This distinction can also be observed in a notable difference in terminology. While Middle Platonists speak of unclear, confused, or unarticulated conceptions (*ennoiai*) that remain, Neoplatonists viewed the *ennoiai* as the vague awareness of the *logoi*. The *logoi* themselves are unaffected by the embodiment and remain clear and articulate.

It is here that *articulation* (the second term of the triad of recollection) comes into play, an originally Stoic notion that was subsequently employed in Middle Platonic readings of Plato (for instance in Plutarch, but most prominently in the Anonymous *Commentary on the Theaetetus*).<sup>45</sup> In Middle Platonism, I submit, what ought to be articulated are the innate contents of the soul itself, whereas for Neoplatonists it is our awareness or apprehension of the *logoi*, which are in themselves clear and articulate. The last step in the

process of recollection is *probolê*, i.e. putting forth and bringing the psychic *logoi* to one's attention, whereby they come to rest before the soul as objects of knowledge and do not remain hidden within it as bedrock principles of our (cognitive) lives we are only dimly and tacitly aware of. It is, as it were, the successful result of articulation.

There is one particular aspect of Proclus' approach that deserves special attention. In his *Commentary on the Alcibiades*, he explains in great detail that, although we are not fully aware of our innate *logoi*, we nevertheless make use of them, albeit not consciously, as it were. This somewhat surprising fact is made more palatable by Proclus through a comparison: just as breathing is essential for staying alive, even though we are, most of the time, not aware of the fact that we are breathing, the same can be said about the innate *logoi*.<sup>46</sup> Even though we are not aware of them, they lie at the basis of all our cognitive processes.

This view has at least one important further implication. While modern scholars frequently maintain that *anamnesis* only concerns higher learning (famously defended by D. Scott),<sup>47</sup> for Proclus it is much more fundamental. Let me illustrate this by means of one example. In his *Commentary on the Timaeus* one passage can be found in which the Neoplatonist seems to argue that recognizing a sensible object already requires innate knowledge.

We must maintain that sense-perception is entirely non-rational. In general, every sense perceives the affection of the animal which stems from the sense object. Thus, for instance, if an apple is presented to us, the sense of sight perceives that it is red because of the affection of the eye, the sense of smell perceives that it is fragrant because of the affection of the nose, (and likewise) the sense of taste perceives that it is sweet, and the sense of touch that it is smooth. But what is it that says that the thing presented to us is an apple? For it is not any of the partial sense-perceptions, since each of these perceives only one of the features of this thing, not the whole, nor is it the *common perception*, since this only distinguishes the differences of the affections, but it does not know that there is a whole that has such a being (*οὐσία*). It is plain, therefore, that there is a certain potency superior to the senses, which knows the whole before the parts and which contemplates its *form* (*εἶδος*) in an indivisible manner, the Form, which holds together all these properties/attributes. This faculty Plato has termed *doxa* (*δόξα*) and the object of sense, therefore, object of *doxa*.

(Proclus, in *Tim.* I 249.12–27)<sup>48</sup>

Proclus here poses the question as to how we can recognize a complex sensible substance such as an apple. An object like this has several properties that relate to different special senses.<sup>49</sup> But none of the special senses nor the so-called common sense, Proclus argues, is able to relate these different sense impressions to a single object, i.e. the red apple on the table. The object as a whole can only be grasped, he continues, by means of its form. And it is the faculty of *doxa* that achieves this task.<sup>50</sup>

The context of the passage, which is situated in the most comprehensive discussion of *doxa* in all of Proclus' works (*in Tim.* I 248.7–252.10)<sup>51</sup> as well as parallel texts make it plain that *doxa* can recognize complex sensible objects because it has access to the psychic *logoi* (the Forms on the level of the soul).

*Doxa* puts forth (*προβάλλειν*) the reason principles (*λόγοι*) of the sensibles from itself and knows their being (*τὰς οὐσίας*). (Proclus, *in Tim.* I 251.6–7)

By embracing the reason principles (*λόγοι*) of the generated objects, opinion takes up the rank of cause in relation to them. This is the reason, it seems to me, that he [sc. Plato] was not satisfied with the term sense-perceptible for designating the generated, but also added that it was an object of *doxa*, since sense-perception knows the properties of perceptibles through being acted upon by them, but opinion also knows their being (*οὐσία*), for it possesses their reason-principles (*λόγοι*) beforehand (*προείληφε*).

(Proclus, *in Tim.* I 292.26–293.4; tr. Runia and Share, modified)

These two passages make it probable that the *logoi* in the soul are not empirical. The phrasing in the last sentence especially ('possess/contain the *logoi* beforehand') is a standard Neoplatonic way to refer to a priori contents.<sup>52</sup> The expression 'to put forth' (*proballein*) is also a technical term for retrieving innate knowledge. In addition, we should consider that if the *logoi* are referred to as causes of sensible reality, they must be prior and not posterior to the sensibles. Finally, it is important to realize that when Proclus speaks in these texts about the *ousia* of the sensible, he refers to their sensible essence, not to their true essence.<sup>53</sup> When *doxa* grasps the essence of a sensible object, it recognizes it as a whole.

Recollection obtains one further systematic function in Proclus' philosophy, as it serves as one of the most fundamental principles of his exegesis of the Platonic dialogue. Such a tendency can at least be traced back to the Anonymous *Commentary on the Theaetetus*. On this view, a conversation between Socrates and an interlocutor is a *maieutic* procedure in the course of which the preconceptions (*ennoiai*) of the interlocutor are articulated, and he undergoes an intellectual development or intellectual ascent. Excellent examples for such a procedure are Proclus' commentaries on the *Alcibiades*, the *Cratylus*, and the *Parmenides*, although, as some modern interpreters of Plato would probably object, recollection is never mentioned explicitly in these dialogues.<sup>54</sup> We can submit that in his lost *Commentary on the Theaetetus* Proclus also employed maieutic as the key notion of exegesis, as the *Anonymous Commentary* already did before him. Hence, the maieutic method may be seen as a universal tool for interpreting the Platonic dialogues as a process of concept acquisition or articulation of preconceptions. The *Charmides*, for instance, as with other (early) Platonic dialogues, illustrates how Socrates, using elenchus and maieutic, cross-examines some 'everyday' concepts (of certain virtues) and compels his interlocutors to revise them. What is more, Platonic *Tugend-dialogue* in general can be taken to illustrate how preconceptions are

articulated and developed further. Such an articulation may eventually lead to a suitable definition of the virtue in question.<sup>55</sup>

## 9.6. SOME CHALLENGES FOR PROCLUS' THEORY

Let me conclude the summary of Proclus' epistemology by drawing attention to two of its more troublesome issues, namely, (1) knowledge of things of which there are no transcendent Forms and (2) the role of *phantasia*. As with the theory of naming, difficulties arise when we are dealing with objects to which no Forms correspond. Names or language in general, as we have seen, refer mainly to transcendent Forms, according to Proclus. Regarding language, we may think of names of individuals or so-called monsters of nature (i.e. deviations from the norm and hence from the intelligible structure of reality).<sup>56</sup> In epistemology, Proclus has developed different strategies to explain how we can know things that do not participate directly in intelligible Forms. A text from the *Commentary on Plato's Parmenides* neatly summarizes his solution:

If there are various other things which we define of which Forms do not exist, such as artificial objects, parts of things, and evil things, there is no cause for astonishment here; for it is by virtue of the fact that we have within us reason-principles of all natural entities and good things, that we know also such things as complete (*συνπληρωτικά*) whole entities [sc. parts], or imitate Nature [sc. artefacts], or those that arise as by-products of good things [sc. evils]. According to the mode in which each of these things exist, so they are knowable and definable to us, and we discourse about them on the basis of the definitively established reason-principles within us.

(Proclus, *in Parm.* V 986.30–987.6; tr. Morrow and Dillon, modified)

This interesting passage presupposes a certain orthodox view on the question as to what things there are Forms of.<sup>57</sup> According to Syrianus and Proclus, there are, for instance, no Forms of parts, artefacts, evils, things contrary to nature, negations, or accidental properties.<sup>58</sup> In the passage in question, the Neoplatonist argues that these can nevertheless be known because our soul carries within itself the images (*logoi*) of the Platonic Forms. This is so because there is a gnoseological relation of psychic *logoi* to parts, artefacts, and evils.<sup>59</sup> Or, to put it differently, we can make inferences about the nature of these objects once we have cognized certain Forms or *logoi*. Parts can be known because we have knowledge of wholes; artefacts can be known since, according to a well-known Aristotelian assertion, art imitates nature (e.g. *Physics* II 2, 194a21–2). Finally, evils can be known via their opposite, the good. Here, Proclus is referring to a specific pattern of argument that can be traced back at least to Aristotle, i.e. that if one knows something he also knows its opposite.<sup>60</sup>

As for the role of *phantasia* in human cognition, it has been noted that in the *Republic* Plato seems to argue that the philosopher can eventually get rid of images,<sup>61</sup> whereas for Aristotle thinking is always accompanied by images (*phantasmata*).<sup>62</sup> In Neoplatonic epistemological debates, we observe a noticeable downgrading of *phantasia* in the cognitive process.<sup>63</sup> Plotinus already asserted that the highest form of thought (*noësis*) is not in need of *phantasia* or *phantasmata*. This is also what Iamblichus maintains in the last book of his *De mysteriis*:

[W]hat basis of inventions can there be in things which exist in reality? Is it not the imaginative faculty in us which is the creator of images?—yet the imagination is never stirred up when the intellectual life is perfectly active.

(Iamblichus, *De myst.* X 2, 286.14–287.3; tr. Clarke et al.)

A tendency can be detected in Syrianus and Proclus to emphasize that *phantasia* is responsible for errors in the cognitive process. In their criticism of empirically derived concepts, both Neoplatonists argue that those concepts can only be considered deficient, and that therefore they may be termed *phantasmata*.<sup>64</sup> What is important in this respect is that concepts stemming ultimately from sensible particulars, which are, in turn, imperfect images of the Forms, cannot be made perfect in the process of abstraction.

It [i.e. the abstracted concept] must remain the same, when taken within, as when it was originally apprehended, in order that it may not become false or 'non-existent', but it may not become anything more perfect.

(Proclus, in *Parm.* IV 893.16–18;

tr. Morrow and Dillon, slightly modified)<sup>65</sup>

From the comparison of *phantasia* with a painter (in Plato's *Philebus*) we learn that *phantasia* depends on sense impressions but also has the capacity to alter or combine these sense data (cf. Proclus, in *Remp.* I 233.3ff.). Compared to *doxa*, however, *phantasia* is not able to judge or correct sense data, since it is essentially non-rational and has, unlike *doxa*, no access to standards or criteria on the basis of which it could pronounce judgements. The difference between *doxa* and *phantasia* boils down to the difference between the non-rational and the rational soul.

It is against this background that we have to understand Proclus' statement about *phantasia*, which is able to transform sense data. These transformations, Proclus explains, do not make sense data more perfect. The contrary is the case: *phantasia* makes them false or non-existent. Let me illustrate this by means of an example. Suppose *phantasia* combines the sense-impression of a goat with that of a stag, or the sense-impression golden with mountain. What we get, then, is the goat-stag or a golden mountain, i.e. mere *fictitious* entities. Hence, combining two sense-impressions that correspond to existing entities (e.g. a goat and a stag) *phantasia* produces something new that does not exist,

namely, a goat-stag.<sup>66</sup> Already in the text from Iamblichus' *De mysteriis*, a contrast can be noted between that which really is (*ontôs on*) and the products of *phantasia* (images, *eidôla*).

There is a group of passages where *phantasia* is criticized because it keeps the soul from knowing itself. These texts have to be understood in the context of the Platonic ascent of the soul through the different levels of being. In this ascent, the lower faculties of the soul are usually depicted as impeding the soul from self-knowledge.<sup>67</sup> *Doxa* too is criticized for the same reason.

It is in geometry that *phantasia* is attributed a more positive role. As already stated, it figures as a kind of projection screen in which (as in intelligible matter) the geometrical objects originate, after having been projected from discursive reasoning (*dianoia*). But this does not mean that *phantasia* itself is active in the process of projection. It only plays an instrumental role and provides the (intelligible) matter of mathematical objects.

## 9.7. CONCLUSION

In this chapter, I have mainly concentrated on what links the three philosophical domains of epistemology, language, and logic together. While logic, in the Aristotelian sense of the word, is an instrument used by the philosopher, an interesting analogy can be detected between language and epistemology. As we have seen, Proclus contrasts Aristotelian logic, which he considers 'empty rules', with Platonic dialectic and argues, in the beginning of his *Commentary on the Cratylus*, that this dialogue is 'logical and dialectical' in the Platonic sense of the word. Hence, in a certain sense, the two disciplines merge and Platonic logic is Platonic dialectic.

Generally speaking, Proclus' exegesis of the *Cratylus* points to the close interconnection between epistemology, language, and logic (dialectic) since words teach about the essence of things, the formal structure of the natural world and hence about its intelligible causes. Most importantly, both epistemology/dialectic and the theory of language can only be understood against the background of Proclus' Platonic ontology.

It is not easy to determine what Proclus' contribution to epistemology, language and logic looked like. As is often the case in later Neoplatonism, the influence of Iamblichus can be felt in many respects. On the other hand, several features of late Neoplatonic epistemology can be found explicitly in Syrianus' and Proclus' works for the first time. And it is this epistemology that is basically taken over, it seems, by Neoplatonic philosophers like Olympiodorus, Philoponus, and Simplicius.<sup>68</sup> Regarding Proclus' originality, there are some indications that he systematized Aristotle's syllogistic and was the first to formulate the later so-called 'rule of obversion'.

Proclus' epistemology is, as we have seen, strongly influenced by a suggestion that can be attributed to Iamblichus, namely, that the form of knowledge is primarily determined by the knower (and not by the object known). Another prominent doctrine of Iamblichus, which the latter laid out in great detail in his *De mysteriis*, can likewise be found in Proclus' writings, that is, the importance of *theurgy* in the ascent of the soul towards the divine.<sup>69</sup> I have already stated that epistemology was no end in itself for the Neoplatonists, its aim being to help the soul to ascend. In this respect, Proclus accepts Iamblichus' thesis that one cannot reach the divine solely by means of philosophy. Such a view can be aptly compared with what earlier Neoplatonists such as Plotinus and Porphyry thought. According to the latter, as we are informed by Iamblichus and Damascius, philosophy is sufficient to reach the highest telos. It must be emphasized, however, that for Proclus theurgy is not to be contrasted with philosophy (in the way philosophy and religion are sometimes contrasted). Rather, theurgy is the fulfilment of philosophy, while the latter is a necessary but not sufficient condition to reach the divine.<sup>70</sup> This can be seen as the Neoplatonic answer to a doctrine that can, for instance, be found in the *Corpus Hermeticum* where coming to know god and likening oneself to god are basically identical. Already in Plato, the concept of *homoiôsis theôi* seems to depend on knowledge of the divine.<sup>71</sup> On the other hand, Neoplatonists, especially from Iamblichus onwards, would maintain that knowledge is a necessary but not a sufficient requirement for reaching the divine.<sup>72</sup>

The aim and purpose of studying epistemology, language theory, and logic seems sufficiently clear. All three are not pursued for their own sake but as a means to enable the soul to purify itself and ascend. For the final step of this ascent, however, philosophy alone is not enough.<sup>73</sup>

## NOTES

1. For the Neoplatonic curriculum, see Ch. 2 in this volume.
2. See Dörrie and Baltes (1996), 'Baustein' 101.1–9 (especially the rich commentary on pp. 205–31). Although the tripartition was attributed to Plato himself by later Platonists, it probably goes back to Xenocrates (see Sextus Empiricus, *Adv. math.* VII 16 = 'Baustein' 101.1).
3. The whole discussion is summarized in Sorabji (2004b: iii. 32–6), with references to secondary literature. See Long and Sedley (1987: ii. 163–5), for a collection of fragments (26A–E) from Stoic philosophers referring to the tripartite division of philosophy.
4. See Ammonius, in *An. pr.* 7.6–11.
5. The syllogism demonstrating the immortality of the soul can also be found in Ammonius' *Commentary on Porphyry's Isagoge* 35.19–22.
6. On this, see Helmig (2009; 2012: passim, esp. 205–21).

7. See section 9.4 of this chapter.
8. See Luna and Segonds (2012: 1555–63). Moreover, we know of a lost work titled *Prolegomena to the Study of Aristotle* (Gr. *συνανάγνωσις*) which most probably also contained an introduction to Aristotelian logic. See, however, Luna and Segonds (2012: 1555–6), who have recently cast doubt on the existence of this work.
9. On the latter work see Dalimier (2000).
10. [1] A is B (quantity: indeterminated, quality: affirmative); [2] A is not B (quantity: indeterminated, quality: affirmative); [3] Every A is B (quantity: universal; quality: affirmative); [4] No A is B (quantity: universal; quality: negative); [5] Some A is B (quantity: particular; quality: affirmative); [6] Not every A is B (quantity: particular; quality: negative).
11. On the sources of the ‘Canon(s) of Proclus’, see Soreth (1972) as well as Diebler (2002) and the other articles quoted in d’Hoine et al. (2005: 106–8). The two relevant passages for the Greek commentary tradition on the ‘Canon of Proclus’ are Ammonius, in *De int.* 181.30ff. and Stephanus, in *De int.* 49.24ff. See also Weidemann (2002<sup>2</sup>: 366–7).
12. On the other hand, Ammonius, in *De int.* 182.34–183.4, maintains that this equivalence does not hold for some indeterminate propositions.
13. On the function of the weaver shuttle and the weaving analogy in general in Plato, see Ademollo (2011: ad loc.).
14. It is important to note that there is also another possibility for understanding the Greek. The sentence as such has two parts comparing the function of a name (*ὄνομα*) or, at least, part of this function, to the function of a weaver shuttle. As far as the syntax of the sentence is concerned, *ὄργανον* seems to go both with *διδασκαλικόν* and *διακριτικόν*, but it is less clear whether only *διακριτικόν* is to be taken with *τῆς οὐσίας* or with both *διακριτικόν* and *διδασκαλικόν*. The final comparison with the weaver shuttle seems to refer only to the method of dividing (*διακριτικόν*) and hence seems to speak in favour of the former alternative. Hence, there are two main possibilities for understanding the sentence, depending on how we understand the *καί* (see the discussion in Van den Berg 2008: 3–4; later on, Van den Berg analyses Alcinous’ interpretation of the sentence 2008: 39–41). It can be understood either as connecting two different functions of names or of language in general, namely teaching and distinguishing, or as an exegetic *καί*. On the latter view, teaching *consists in* distinguishing essences from each other. However that may be, it is clear that, if names are instruments for teaching, the question naturally arises as to what they actually teach. And the text seems to suggest that they teach about essences or dividing essences. On the whole discussion, see now Ademollo (2011: ad loc.).
15. See Van den Berg (2008: 133): ‘Proclus’ theory of names is a truly Platonic one. It presupposes both a Platonic ontology (the existence of intelligible Forms) and a Platonic epistemology (true knowledge is knowledge of these Forms).’
16. On the interrelation between language and reality, see the instructive remarks by Martijn (2010a: ch. 5).
17. See, for instance, Ammonius, in *Porph. Isag.* 35.4–9.
18. See Van den Berg (2008: 147–54). This explains, inter alia, why there can be different languages because they differ only with respect to their *material* elements



- (letters, pronunciation) (2008: 148), and it entails that ‘in the case of individuals, names are correct because of convention’ (2008: 197).
19. On this, see, for instance, d’Hoine (2010).
  20. On Proclus’ exegesis of the origin of divine names, see Van den Berg (2008: 168–9). The idea that the gods have their own (divine) language goes as far back as Homer. See also Van den Berg (2008: 81): ‘In fact, he [sc. Proclus] makes the stability of the divine names into his most important argument for the thesis of the natural correctness of names against Aristotelian conventionalism.’
  21. This reminds one of the Gospel of John 1: 1: ‘In the beginning was the word, etc.’
  22. On Proclus’ views on demiurgy, see also Ch. 7 in this volume.
  23. On the importance and role of concepts in ancient epistemology, see Gerson (1999) and Helmig (2012).
  24. Note that Van den Berg (2008: 116) takes *ἀποτελείται* as referring to the things (*τὰ πράγματα*). This is grammatically possible, but I suggest connecting *ἀποτελείται* with *λόγος*, understanding *λόγος* as a result (or manifestation) of our thoughts or concepts that are akin to the things.
  25. In the same way, the *logoi* in the soul can be said to be images of the intelligible Forms in the intellect (Proclus, *Theol. plat.* I 29, 124.12–20).
  26. See Helmig (2012: 19–23 and 309–12).
  27. On this, see Van den Berg (2008: 132 and 89–91).
  28. On Proclus’ theory of knowledge, see, for instance, Beierwaltes (1975), Blumenthal (1989), Siorvanes (1996: 114–206), Steel (1997a), MacIsaac (2001), Martijn (2008: 163–296), Chlup (2012: 137–62), Helmig (2012: 1–37, 205–341). In what follows I focus mainly on the human soul and human discursive thought. Other (higher) aspects of Proclus’ epistemology are dealt with in more detail in Chs 5 and 11 in this volume.
  29. See later in this chapter. On the importance of theurgy for Syrianus and Proclus see, for instance, Sheppard (1982), Chlup (2012: 168–84), Helmig and Vargas (2014), and Ch. 11 in this volume.
  30. On the Neoplatonic approach to psychology in general, see the summary in Helmig (2014: 149–57).
  31. On the parts and faculties of the soul in Proclus, see Opsomer (2006b), Helmig (2014), and Ch. 6 in this volume.
  32. On these *logoi*, see later in this chapter.
  33. On *doxa* and doxastic concepts in Proclus, see Helmig (2012: 223–61).
  34. See e.g. Gerson (2009: 27–61).
  35. The underlying principle of such reasoning, it seems, is the Neoplatonic axiom that an effect cannot be more potent than its cause (Proclus, *El. theol.* § 7: *Πάν το παρακτικόν ἄλλου κρείττον ἐστι τῆς τοῦ παραγομένου φύσεως*).
  36. See O’Meara (1989: 134 n. 45 and 167–8) as well as Harari (2006, 2008). On the meaning and function of *προβολή* in Proclus and before, see Helmig (2012: 289–99). Cf. also Ch. 8 in this volume.
  37. See O’Meara (1989: 142–209), Schmitz (1997), the volume edited by Lernould (2010), as well as the useful summary in Chlup (2012: 151–8).
  38. For a discussion of the passage in the context of Alcinous’ epistemology, see Helmig (2012: 147–54).

39. On the sources of Proclus' doctrine of the psychic *logoi*, see Helmig (2012: 192–5, 268–72). Plotinus is of special importance in this story.
40. For the different levels of forms in Proclus, see also Ch. 5 in this volume.
41. On the ontological analogy in Platonism, see the material collected in Dörrie and Baltes (1996), 'Baustein' 110, with the comprehensive commentary on pp. 360–77.
42. For this principle, see also Ch. 3 in this volume.
43. See also *El. theol.* § 194: Πᾶσα ψυχὴ πάντα ἔχει τὰ εἶδη, ἃ ὁ νοῦς πρῶτως ἔχει.
44. This has sometimes been questioned; see the discussion in Helmig (2012: 251–4).
45. The notion and metaphor of articulation, which can also be found in Proclus' *Commentary on the Cratylus*, is another reference to the all-pervading analogy between language and epistemology.
46. Proclus, *in Alc.* 192.3; cf. *in Alc.* 189.10–11 and the seminal paper by Steel (1997a), aptly called 'Breathing Thought: Proclus on the Innate Knowledge of the Soul'.
47. See Scott (1995) and the response by Helmig (2012: 39–86).
48. The text is also translated in Sorabji (2004b: ii. 35 (1.1.a.6)). See also Sorabji (2004a: 105).
49. I use 'special senses' in the usual Aristotelian sense (*De anima* II 6), and this is clearly Proclus' point of reference in our passage.
50. See Proclus, *in Tim.* I 251.21–4: 'Doxa together with sense-perception grasps the object of generation, but by itself *doxa* examines all the Forms (εἶδη) that is has in itself. About these Forms we have spoken elsewhere [sc. in the now lost *Commentary on the Theaetetus*], namely how they subsist and in which manner the doxastic faculty of the soul is their seat.' The 'Forms' in question are the Forms on the level of the soul, i.e. the reason-principles (*logoi*). For the reference to Proclus' lost commentary, see Helmig (2012: 255).
51. See Helmig (2012: 243–61). The well-known apple passage is quoted on p. 247.
52. See, for instance, Proclus, *in Parm.* IV 893.12–15 Steel: οὕτω δὴ καὶ ὁμοίως καὶ ἕκαστον τῶν ἄλλων. οὕτω δὴ καὶ τὸ γινώσκον αὐτὰ κοινῶς τῷ τοῦς λόγους προειληφέναι θεωρεῖ τὰς κοινότητας αὐτῶν. οὔτε γὰρ παρ' αὐτῶν τῶν αἰσθητῶν λαμβάνει τὸ κοινόν. This passage contrasts the innate *logoi* of the soul with abstracted/empirically derived concepts. See also *El. theol.* § 195 for the use of *προλαμβάνειν*.
53. This meaning of *οὐσία* can be traced back to Plato's *Theaetetus* 186a–b; see Helmig (2012: 250–1, with n.165).
54. Regarding the *Commentary on the Cratylus*, Van den Berg (2008: 198), speaks correctly of a 'pedagogical perspective' that characterized Proclus' exegesis, explaining that 'Socrates in the *Cratylus* uses the products of the namegiver, the correctly established names, to lead his student Hermogenes towards the paradigm of these names, the innate Ideas that both he and Hermogenes possess' (2008: 160). Note that the *Parmenides* differs from the other two dialogues insofar it is (young) Socrates himself who is taught by the Eleatic philosopher Parmenides.
55. See Helmig (2012: 40–1, 299).
56. See Van den Berg (2008: 123–8) on the problem of names of individuals in Proclus.
57. Pieter d'Hoine (Leuven) has contributed several articles on this problem; see d'Hoine (2006a, 2006b, 2010, 2011a, 2011b). See also the volume edited by d'Hoine and Michalewski (2011).

58. See Dörrie and Baltes (1998), 'Baustein' 132.2a–b, with the rich commentary on pp. 343–50.
59. Although the context of *in Parm.* V 986.30–987.6 deals with definition and the question of how we can *define* things.
60. See Aristotle *De an.* III 6, 430b22–3, and Helmig (2010: 45–6, with notes).
61. See Plato, *Resp.* VI 510b, 511c, and VII 532a. I take these latter passages and other crucial material from the short but extremely rich discussion in Sorabji (2004b: i. 132–3). See also Damascius, *in Phd.* I § 112–13, with the notes by Westerink (1977), as well as Olympiodorus, *in Phd.* VI § 2.15–17.
62. Aristotle, *De an.* III 7, 431a16, b2, and 432a3–14 as well as *De mem.* 1, 449b31–450a1.
63. See Watson (1988) and Helmig (2012: 225–32). The former asserts (1988: 131): 'The negative attitude to *phantasia*, in spite of the interest in it, is, as we have seen, the most striking aspect of the Neoplatonic treatment of *phantasia*. This contrasts strongly with Aristotle's attitude and particularly with that of the Stoics.'
64. Proclus, *in Parm.* IV 893.15 and 30; cf. *in Eucl.* 45.8.
65. Cf. the parallel passage in Syrianus, *in Met.* 96.6–10.
66. Proclus, *in Parm.* IV 898.18–22; cf. also *in Parm.* IV 885.12–13 and *in Remp.* I 31.7–8.
67. Cf., for instance, Proclus, *in Alc.* 245.17–246.3; *in Tim.* I 247.10–12 and III 345.17–20. Cf. also *in Alc.* 104.23–5 where *phantasia* is mentioned together with sense-perception and non-rational affections (*πάθη*).
68. On Proclus' strong influence on later Neoplatonists, see Simplicius, *in Phys.* 795.11–16, tr. J. O. Urmson: 'Proclus' successors right up to our time have followed him not only on this point, but in all other matters. I except Asclepiodotus, the best of Proclus' pupils, and our Damascius, of whom the former because of his extreme cleverness, rejoiced in novel doctrines, while Damascius, through rivalry and his sympathy with Iamblichus, did not hesitate to reject many of Proclus' doctrines.'
69. For the role of theurgy in Proclus' thought, see also Ch. 11 in this volume.
70. See Iamblichus, *De myst.* II 11, as well as Helmig and Vargas (2014).
71. Note, however, that *Theaetetus* 176b also mentions justice and especially piety (*δίκαιον καὶ ὅσιον*) as prerequisite to approaching the highest principle.
72. See Helmig and Vargas (2014).
73. I would like to thank Marko Malink (New York) for generous advice and indispensable help on the part dealing with Proclus' logic. Let me also thank the two editors of the volume for their instructive comments and careful editing.

## Proclus' Theology

*Luc Brisson*

To consider Plato's philosophy as a theology that must be brought into line with all the other pagan theologies appears to us, as historians of philosophy, if not as an aberration, then at least as a disconcerting project.<sup>1</sup> Nevertheless, this exegetical approach can be explained, as I would like to show here, both by the internal evolution of the Platonic school and by its fierce resistance against the domination of the Christians, who were a very broad majority in the fifth century AD and had acquired economic and political power in the Greek world. Relying on the wealthy family of Plutarch that played, moreover, a political role of the first importance at Athens, the Neoplatonic school in general, and Proclus in particular, sought to keep alive the tradition of pagan Greece. Pagan theology became a science when it ceased to be linked with the religion of the cities and the state with its myths and cults and became associated with the reading of the second part of Plato's *Parmenides*.

To defend themselves effectively, the Neoplatonists had to display the agreement between the philosophy of Plato and its religious background, represented not only by the myths transmitted by Homer, Hesiod, the Orphic poems, and the *Chaldaean Oracles*, but also by the rituals associated with them.

### 10.1. PLATO'S PHILOSOPHY MUST BE CONSIDERED AS A THEOLOGY

The Athenian School considered Plato to be a theologian whose work was assimilated to a sacred scripture that reveals, albeit in a different way, the same truth as other sacred texts, particularly those of Orpheus and the Chaldaeans. Yet how did it get to the point of considering Plato's doctrine to be a theology? The answer must be: as a result of a certain interpretation of Plato's *Parmenides*, which replaced the *Timaeus* as the dialogue of reference from Plotinus on (see Trouillard 1973).

In the sixth book of his *Commentary on the Parmenides*, Proclus traces the history of the interpretations of the second part of the dialogue (see Steel 2002). There were many interpretations of the second part of the *Parmenides* prior to Plotinus: it was to be regarded either as a simple exercise intended to refute Zeno on his own territory of logic, or as an example of the method to be followed to refute the difficulties raised against the doctrine of the Forms in the first part of the dialogue. Yet Proclus rejects them all, since he considers the hypotheses in the second part of the dialogue to be dealing with the first beings proceeding from the One, who is the first god: that is, the gods. This interpretation goes back to Plotinus, who associated the first three hypotheses with his three hypostases, and to Plotinus' disciples Amelius and Porphyry, who extended this exegetical method to all the hypotheses. The decisive turning point, however, was made by Iamblichus, who wished to see a description of the classes of the gods in the first three hypotheses, and then by the so-called philosopher of Rhodes, who maintained that the goal of the second part of the *Parmenides* was to show that the existence of all realities depended on the existence of the One, and that the hypotheses were distributed into two corresponding groups.<sup>2</sup> Taken up by Plutarch of Athens and systematized by Syrianus, this interpretation was accepted by Proclus.<sup>3</sup>

For Proclus, the first five hypotheses of the second part of the *Parmenides* make the existence of all reality dependent on the existence of the One, whereas the last four show, by means of a *reductio ad absurdum*, that if the One does not exist, nothing exists. In addition, each of the conclusions of these nine hypotheses deals with a different order of realities, corresponding to a specific divine order. Thus, Proclus refutes the objection of those who claim that no treatise on systematic theology is to be found in Plato, only, at most, a few theological fragments scattered here and there. To dissolve any suspicion of scepticism, Proclus launched into a twofold process of validation: by a demonstration *more geometrico* in the *Elements of Theology*, modelled upon Euclid's *Elements*, and by establishing a complete parallelism between the Platonic system and the divinities of other theologies, particularly the *Orphic Rhapsodies* and the *Chaldaean Oracles*, in his commentaries and especially in the *Platonic Theology*.

According to Proclus, as we have just seen, the second part of Plato's *Parmenides* contains the entire system of Platonic theology, and the interpretation of all Plato's other dialogues had to be referred to this treatise of scientific theology.<sup>4</sup> As Proclus explains in Dissertations 5 and 6 of his *Commentary on the Republic*,<sup>5</sup> however, Plato expounds his teaching on the gods in several ways: dialectically in the *Parmenides* and the *Sophist*; symbolically in the *Protagoras*, the *Gorgias*, and the *Symposium*; under divine inspiration in the *Phaedrus*;<sup>6</sup> and in a manner that proceeds from images in the *Timaeus* and the *Statesman*.<sup>7</sup> Yet these various ways of approaching the divine correspond to those adopted by the various theologians: Orpheus, Pythagoras, the

Table 10.1

Modes of exposition	Platonic works	Theologian
by means of symbols	<i>Protagoras, Gorgias, Symposium</i>	Orpheus
under divine inspiration	<i>Phaedrus</i>	Chaldaeans
by means of images	<i>Timaeus, Statesman</i>	Pythagoras
by means of dialectics	<i>Sophist, Parmenides</i>	Plato

Chaldaeans, and Plato (see Table 10.1). Orpheus reveals the divine principles by means of symbols;<sup>8</sup> Pythagoras uses images, insofar as mathematics plays the part of images with regard to the divine principles;<sup>9</sup> the Chaldaeans express themselves under divine inspiration; and Plato's work is characterized by a scientific mode of expression (see Bouffartigue 1987).

In the context of this programme, the works of Homer and Hesiod, while not neglected, were thus supplanted by the *Orphic Rhapsodies*,<sup>10</sup> which represented 'Greek theology', and the *Chaldaean Oracles*, representing 'Barbarian theology'. This primacy, which may at first glance seem surprising, can be explained by the fact that these two texts were composed from a Middle Platonic perspective. It was therefore easy for the Neoplatonists to find traces of Platonic doctrine in them.

## 10.2. THE AGREEMENT BETWEEN THE THEOLOGY OF PLATO AND OTHER THEOLOGIES

The extensive use of this exegetical practice<sup>11</sup> allows Proclus, on the one hand, to interpret all Plato's dialogues from a theological viewpoint, in the perspective of the second part of the *Parmenides*, and, on the other, to demonstrate the agreement of this scientific theology with that of Pythagoras, Orpheus, and the *Chaldaean Oracles* (see Saffrey 1992a). This agreement was necessary, for each theology can only speak the truth and must therefore agree with all the others, since theology is a discourse on the gods and comes from the gods.

### 10.2.1. Orpheus and Pythagoras as Inspirers of Plato: The Foundational Myth in Iamblichus

At the beginning of the *Platonic Theology*, while evoking the entire history of philosophy in its broad outlines, Proclus writes:

Each of these doctrines must be declared to be in agreement with the principles of Plato and with the mystical traditions of the theologians, for all of Greek theology

is the offspring of Orphic mystagogy. Pythagoras was the first who taught the initiations concerning the gods by Aglaophamus; second, Plato received the complete science concerning them from the Pythagorean and Orphic writings.

(*Theol. plat.* I 5, 25.24–26.4)

For Proclus, the philosophy of Plato is a theology that must be aligned with the other theologies, and in particular the Greek theology associated with the Mysteries. Proclus therefore replaces Greek theology, described as ‘mystagogy’, within the quite specific context of the Mysteries. The Greek term *mustagôgia* (μυσταγωγία) designates the action of a *mustagôgos*, the priest responsible for guiding (*agôgos*) a person requesting to be initiated into the Mysteries (*mustês*). The most important moment was that of the ‘initiation’ (*teletê*). From an anthropological viewpoint, an initiation may be defined as a ritual act that dramatizes a change of state. One speaks of initiation in the case of rites of passage from adolescence to adulthood that symbolically transform a young man into a warrior and a young woman into a mother. One also speaks of initiation for the ceremonies of consecration that illustrate an individual’s passage from a profane to a sacred state, turning him into a king or priest. Here we have to do with the passage from a lower to a higher degree of knowledge, in the context of a conversion. More precisely, what is at stake is the individual’s establishment of new relations with the world of the gods, assimilated to the realm of the Intelligible, and more generally still with all that is beyond our universe. One can therefore understand why initiation among the Neoplatonists, associated quite naturally with the Mysteries, ended in *epopteia*, that is, the contemplation of sacred objects, assimilated in a Platonic context to the intelligible realities.

But what incited the Neoplatonists of the School of Athens to establish concrete links, on this theoretical level, between Plato, Pythagoras, and Orpheus (Brisson 2002)? In his *Commentary on Plato’s Timaeus*, after mentioning Iamblichus by name, Proclus adds the following specifications on Timaeus of Locri, the character who speaks in the *Timaeus* and lends his name to the dialogue:

Timaeus was a Pythagorean, and he therefore follows the Pythagorean principles. But these are the Orphic traditions, for what Orpheus transmitted mystically in ineffable discourses, Pythagoras learned thoroughly when he was initiated in Thracian Libethra, when the initiating agent, Aglaophamus, communicated to him the wisdom about the gods that Orpheus was taught by his mother Calliope; for this is what Pythagoras himself says in his *Sacred Discourse*. Let us inquire, therefore, what these Orphic traditions are, since we believe it is to them that Timaeus’ teachings on the gods must be traced back. Orpheus handed down that the kings of the gods presiding over all things according to the perfect number [ $6 = 1 + 2 + 3 = 1 \times 2 \times 3$ ] were Phanes, Night, Ouranos, Kronos, Zeus, and Dionysus. (*in Tim.* III 168.8–20)<sup>12</sup>

Taking up a tradition that accused Plato of plagiarizing the Pythagoreans, Proclus turns it around in his favour, by exhibiting Plato's originality with regard to a tradition on which he depends (Brisson 1993). He establishes a concrete link between Plato's *Timaeus* and the well-known inauthentic treatise *On the Nature of the World and the Soul* attributed to the Pythagorean Timaeus of Locri,<sup>13</sup> which he considers not inauthentic, but an original work from the fifth century BC, from which Plato derived the inspiration to write his dialogue (*in Tim.* I 1.9–16). It was thus through the intermediary of Timaeus of Locri, or so Proclus thought, that Plato came to know the Pythagorean principles. In fact, these principles themselves are Orphic, since Pythagoras was initiated into the doctrines of Orpheus by Aglaophamus. For Proclus, therefore, metaphysics and religion converge through the intermediary of this Aglaophamus, as early as the time of Pythagoras and Plato.

The person who undertook to prove the reality of this convergence happens to have been Iamblichus, who intervened on the level of both theory and myth. In the first paragraph of his *Life of Pythagoras*, the book that was to serve as an introduction to his work in ten books entitled *On the Pythagorean School*, Iamblichus writes:

At the start of every philosophical investigation, it is after all the custom, at least for all who are sound-minded, to invoke God. But at the outset of that philosophy rightly believed to be named after the divine Pythagoras, it is surely all the more fitting to do this; for since this philosophy was at first handed down by the gods, it cannot be comprehended without the gods' aid. (Iambl., *V. Pyth.* § 1; tr. Dillon and Hershbell)

For Iamblichus, Pythagorean philosophy, consisting in the four mathematical disciplines of the *quadrivium*, is nothing more than preparation for true philosophy: that of Plato. The programme of this philosophy is given in the *Republic*, and culminates in the second part of the *Parmenides* (read as a veritable treatise on theology). To establish this lineage, Iamblichus needs, on the one hand, to link Pythagoras to a religious tradition, in this case Orphism, and, on the other, to establish an objective link between Plato and Pythagoreanism.

Since philosophy is a gift from God, it is akin to revelation. In the first lines of the work Iamblichus titled *Sacred Discourse* or *Sacred Discourse on the Gods*, Pythagoras does present the philosophy he teaches as a revelation:

If someone, then, wishes to learn from whence these men received such a degree of piety, it must be said that a clear model for Pythagorean theology according to number is found in (the writings of) Orpheus. It is certainly no longer doubtful that Pythagoras took his inspiration from Orpheus when he organized his treatise *On Gods*, which he also entitled *The Sacred Discourse*, since it sprang from the most mystic part of the Orphic corpus.... It is certainly clear from this *Sacred Discourse* (or *Discourse on the Gods*, both titles exist) who gave Pythagoras the



discourse on the gods, for it says: 'This (discourse) is what Pythagoras, son of Mnemarchus, learned on initiation in the Thracian Libethra, from Aglaophamus the initiate, who communicated to me that Orpheus, son of Calliope, taught by his mother on Mt. Pangaeon, said: "The eternal being of number is a most provident principle of the whole heaven, earth, and of the intermediate nature; moreover, it is a source of permanence for divine (men) and gods and demons." From this, then, it is clear that he derived the idea of the essence of the gods as defined by number from the Orphics.' (V. *Pyth.* § 145–7; tr. Dillon and Hershbelt)

The confused explanations Iamblichus offers for the literary paternity of this treatise show definite embarrassment. Indeed, outside of the testimony of Iamblichus and that of Proclus who transmits it, there is no other testimony pertaining to a character as important as Aglaophamus. We may therefore assume this character is a pure invention. Either Iamblichus was citing a Neopythagorean inauthentic work, or he was himself responsible for the composition of that work.

How can we explain, on a strictly philosophical level, the strategy of Iamblichus, as he tries to root philosophy in the tradition of the Mysteries, which goes back by way of Pythagoras to Orpheus? On what Platonic text could Iamblichus base such an approach?

The answer to the first question seems to be as follows. Iamblichus rejects Plotinus' thesis that a higher part of the human soul remains with the Intelligible.<sup>14</sup> For Iamblichus, the soul unites with the body completely. This position is Aristotelian, and implies as a consequence that the soul's salvation must necessarily come from elsewhere, particularly from theurgy (Iambl., *De myst.* II 11, 96.13–97.4). The truth can only be achieved by means of a revelation dispensed by the gods themselves, who thus provide a remedy for human weakness, and it is this ritual that allows one to reach actual salvation.

Yet where can such a conception of philosophy as revelation find justification in Plato's own work? One answer to this question relies on a highly focused interpretation of two passages from the *Phaedrus* concerning madness (*Phdr.* 245b–c and especially 265a–b). Madness is defined as a deviation from the habitual behaviour and customs of a given human group. For Plato, this deviation may be due to a human illness or to a divine impulse. In the first case, a human being loses his reason to fall to the lower rank of animals. In the second, his behaviour is transformed, because he accedes to a higher level, that of the gods. At *Phaedrus* 245b–c, the divine madness in which philosophy consists is associated with other kinds of madness, viz. divination, the practice of initiation, and poetry, but Plato does not place it on the same level as these three, for two reasons. First, although divination, the practice of initiation, and poetry introduce human beings to the world of the gods, they do not enable them to accede to the contemplation of the Intelligible. Second, whereas the latter allow passive behaviour on the part of human beings, philosophy, in contrast, presents itself as a constant apprenticeship to death, and as the

liberation of the soul with a view to acceding to the contemplation of the Intelligible. This passage from the *Phaedrus* attracted Iamblichus' attention at length in book III of his *On the Mysteries of Egypt*, where, after investigating the causes of divine madness (chapter 8), he evokes music (chapter 9), initiations (chapter 10), and divination (chapter 11).<sup>15</sup>

Iamblichus took up all these themes, whose gradual emergence can be followed, beginning with the renewal of Platonism and Pythagoreanism at the beginning of the Christian era, and he was the first to give them all the coherence of the 'philosophical myth' of Pythagoras' initiation into the Orphic Mysteries through the intermediary of Aglaophamus. All later Platonists were to take up this myth, while refining it, particularly those belonging to the School of Athens, for whom—as we have seen—philosophy culminates in the second part of Plato's *Parmenides*, interpreted as a treatise of theology. In this ascent towards the divine, the role of Pythagoras, following that of Aglaophamus, must be considered that of the 'one who initiates' (*mustagôgos*). This 'myth' told by Iamblichus constitutes a turning point in the history of Platonism, for it justifies the philosophical orientation of the School of Athens, in which metaphysics and theology became indiscernible.

It is impossible to know precisely what role the exegesis of the Orphic poems played in Iamblichus' commentaries on the dialogues of Plato. Nevertheless, the study of Orphism was integrated within the study programme of the School of Athens from a very early date, as is testified by two disciples of Plutarch of Athens, who was considered the founder of the school. Hierocles devoted the entire fifth book of his *On Providence* (which contained seven books) to showing that Orpheus and Homer were the precursors of Plato (see Photius, *Library*, codex 214, 173a). Yet it was not until Syrianus that the reference to Orphism, qualified as 'Greek theology', became systematic, in tandem with the *Chaldaean Oracles*, which were described as 'Barbarian theology' (Brisson 2009).

### 10.2.2. The *Chaldaean Oracles* and the Programme of Study in the Neoplatonic Schools of Athens and of Alexandria

In his *Life of Proclus*, Marinus tells how Syrianus had proposed to his students, Proclus and Domninus, to carry out for them the exegesis either of the *Chaldaean Oracles* or of the Orphic poems. In 432 (probably in September) Proclus began at Athens, under the guidance of Syrianus, the study of the authors who were to be explained in the school: Aristotle, Plato, and the Theologians (§ 13). Yet the dissent between Proclus and Domninus prevented Syrianus from completing the programme: in addition to the principles of the Chaldaeans, he did not have the time to set forth those of Orphism in a series of courses, to which Proclus must be alluding in his *Commentary on the*

*Timaeus* (I 315.1–2), when he speaks of ‘courses on Orphism’ (*Orphikai sunousiai*). We cannot know whether it was before or after these courses that Syrianus wrote his commentaries on Orpheus, i.e. very probably, *On the Theology of Orpheus* and *The Agreement between Orpheus, Pythagoras, Plato and the Chaldaean Oracles*. Proclus studied these works shortly after his master’s death, in order to perfect his knowledge of Orphism (Brisson 1987a). It was in the margins of these books that he later wrote lengthy notes, at the request of Marinus. Moreover, Syrianus did not reserve his exegesis of the Orphic poems for the last stage of his teaching programme, but he must have had recourse to them in his reading with commentary of Plato’s various dialogues. This is clear, for instance, in the *Commentary on Plato’s Phaedrus*, in which Hermias collected notes reproducing the oral teaching of Syrianus in the context of the courses at which Proclus was also present and asked questions (see in *Phdr.* 92.6 sq. Couvreur = 96.24 sq. Lucarini–Moreschini). This practice was maintained in Proclus, as we can observe in his commentaries on the *Timaeus*, the *Republic*, the *Cratylus*, the *Alcibiades*, and the *Parmenides*, and in the *Platonic Theology*.

We can therefore understand why Damascius, who was the last head of the Neoplatonic School of Athens, attributed the same importance to Orphism in his *Commentary on the Parmenides* (see Brisson 1991). In his *Life of Isidore*, moreover, Damascius testifies to the importance of Orphism and the *Chaldaean Oracles* in the Neoplatonic School of Alexandria (Brisson 1992).

### 10.3. WHAT ARE THE ‘OTHER THEOLOGIES’?

A study of the contents and philosophical background of the *Orphic Rhapsodies* and the *Chaldaean Oracles* allows us to understand why these ‘sacred’ texts, considered representative of ‘Greek theology’ and ‘Barbarian theology’, were chosen by the Neoplatonists of the School of Athens to be aligned with Plato’s ‘scientific theology’.

#### 10.3.1. The *Orphic Rhapsodies*

Three versions of the Orphic theogony may be distinguished. (1) First is an older version, the one evoked by Aristophanes, Plato, Aristotle, and Eudemos, and commented on in the Derveni papyrus, which is, very probably, the *Sacred Discourse* mentioned by Herodotus (II 81). (2) Then there is the version of the *Sacred Discourses in 24 Rhapsodies*, a new version written on the basis of the old one and of various poems considered to be Orphic, towards the beginning of the Christian era, and in a Middle Platonic context. The expression ‘sacred

discourses' indicates the religious character of these texts, while 'in 24 rhapsodies' associates them with the Homeric poems as far as their antiquity is concerned. (3) Third is another version, presumably an attempt to harmonize the theogony of the *Rhapsodies* with those of Hesiod and Homer, and was attributed to Hieronymus and (?) Hellanicus (Brisson 1990).

Most of the testimonies that have come down to us on the Orphic theogony pertain to the version that Damascius qualifies as 'current (*συνήθης*)', i.e. the *Sacred Discourses in 24 Rhapsodies* (*De princ.* I 123, 317.23–14 Ruelle = III 160.16 Combès–Westerink). In this version, the primordial principle is Chronos, i.e. Time, who engenders Ether and Chaos (Fr. 66 Kern = Fr. 105 Bernabé). Everything was then indistinct (Fr. 67 Kern = Fr. 106 Bernabé), probably an allusion to Erebus or to Night. By means of Ether, Chronos fashions an Egg of dazzling whiteness (Fr. 70 Kern = Fr. 114 Bernabé). Phanes, also known as Eros, emerges from this primordial Egg.<sup>16</sup> The reign of Phanes is succeeded by that of Night. From Phanes and from Night come Ouranos and Gaia. Kronos, one of the Titans, emasculates his father Ouranos and seizes his throne, but he is himself dethroned by Zeus, who emasculates him in turn. Zeus unites with his daughter Kore to engender Dionysus, to whom he transfers sovereignty while Dionysus is still a child. Then follow the episodes that first recount Dionysus' murder by the Titans, his dismemberment into seven pieces, and consumption, and finally the punishment of the Titans, who are struck by Zeus' thunderbolt. But from the heart of Dionysus saved by Athena, a new Dionysus is born.

Several indications allow us to assume that the *Rhapsodies* were composed around the beginning of our era, on the basis of the older version of the theogony and of various poems attributed to Orpheus. The main argument in favour of this dating consists in the fact that no testimony on Chronos, the mythical figure who precedes Night at the beginning of the *Rhapsodies*, goes back earlier than the second half of the second century. The introduction of this figure is the result of the influence on Orphism of Mithraism, which was introduced into the Roman Empire at the beginning of the Christian period (Brisson 1985). This dating allows us to explain why one can discern traces of Stoic allegory in the *Rhapsodies*, and why a Neopythagorean influence (the importance accorded to numbers) and even a Middle Platonic influence (double creation, divine triads) are manifest in them. The Neoplatonists therefore had no difficulty in finding elements similar to Platonic doctrine in these Orphic poems.

### 10.3.2. The Chaldaean Oracles

Traditionally, the origin of the *Chaldaean Oracles* is attributed to two 'Chaldaeans', that is, two 'magicians', by the name of Julian, who lived under Marcus Aurelius (who reigned from AD 161 to 180), and are mentioned by two notices in the Suda (I 433, 434). In one testimony (the *Accusation of*

*Michael Cerularius*), Psellus speaks of Trajan instead (who reigned from AD 98 to 117), but this can be explained in different ways: either Psellus is speaking of the elder Julian, or he is mistaken. In addition, in a passage from the *Commentary on the Parmenides* preserved in the translation by William of Moerbeke (in *Parm.* VII 512.23–33 Steel), Proclus alludes, through the intermediary of the *Chaldaean Oracles*, to the Syrian god Hadad. Because of this allusion, H. D. Saffrey (1990) was led to believe that the Julians may have been of Syrian origin.

A work called *On the Demons* is attributed to the elder Julian, who is also described as a philosopher. To the younger Julian, whose father had turned him into a medium, and who alone is described as a ‘theurge’, are attributed works devoted to *Theurgy* (*Theourgika*) and to the *Initiations* (*Telestika*), as well as *Oracles* (*Logia*) in verse, which must be the *Chaldaean Oracles*. They consist in revelations concerning the doctrine set forth by Plato, especially in the *Timaeus*, and obtained by Julian the Theurge after he had been trained by his father by means of theurgic procedures. The *Timaeus* was thus interpreted in a Middle Platonic context.

How were the *Oracles* presented in their original collection?<sup>17</sup> It has naturally been hypothesized that the questions to which the *logia* are the answers have not been preserved, since no question is to be found. This is an argument *e silentio*, which is worth whatever such arguments are worth. Like all other oracular responses transmitted in Greek, the *Chaldaean Oracles* are in dactylic hexameters. They contain a large number of Homeric quotations or allusions, and abound in neologisms and bizarre turns of phrase, because of the fact that they are written in verse, and many of the Platonic terms they used could not fit into the chosen metre.

Insofar as we can picture it, the worldview presented by the *Oracles* is akin to the one found in religious currents of the early Empire: (1) the fiery world pertains exclusively to the intelligible, (2) the ethereal world, probably a mixture of fire and air, includes the celestial bodies, (3) finally, the material world encompasses the sublunary world, incorporating the four elements (fire, air, water, and earth), and the entire terrestrial world, a world given over to becoming, birth, and death, which the soul must escape by purifying itself with the help of the techniques of theurgy.

These three worlds are structured as functions of the three principles emphasized in Middle Platonism: God, the Model, and Matter. Faced by Stoicized and Aristotelianized Platonism, which was influenced by a cultivated and eclectic Scepticism, the need for a more religious philosophy gradually made itself felt in some philosophers. It was then that Plato’s thought made a reappearance as a means to accede to another order of realities, that of the Forms and the divine, which can be apprehended only by the soul. Thus, in the first century of our era occurred that renaissance that has been baptized Middle Platonism.

On the level of exegesis, the dialogues of reference the Middle Platonists used to construct this new dogmatism were the *Timaeus* and the *Republic*. These dialogues were not, at least at first, the subject of continuous commentaries, but were examined for viewpoints on the divinity, the world, human kind, and society, in the context of a system articulated around the three already mentioned principles or initial givens: God, the Model, and Matter.

- God was to be identified with the Good of the *Republic* and the Demiurge of the *Timaeus*. Since this god is the very highest god or supreme principle, nothing can be superior to him. This supremacy determines the type of relation that god has with the second principle, the Model. The Middle Platonists were accustomed to envisaging the problem by recalling the passage from the *Timaeus* (29a6–7), in which the Demiurge is said to keep his eyes on his eternal model. From this they derived the belief that the intelligible Forms were in some way the ‘thoughts’ of God, although this did not prevent the Forms from having an existence in themselves, outside the Intellect.
- The Model corresponded to the Forms and thus to the Intelligible, which, as the object of the thought of Intellect, or first god, was different from and lower than that god.
- Matter is the third principle. Plato was supposed to have limited himself to following the opinion of his predecessors, and, like them, he accepted only four elements, out of which all the other bodies are formed as the result of transformations and combinations in accordance with definite proportions. These elements are earth, water, air, and fire, which occupy places in space determined by the very constitution of the universe. They emerged from a unique, homogeneous, and undifferentiated matter, which is probably what Plato in the *Timaeus* calls the third kind, the wandering cause, extension, or receptacle. This third kind was perceived as a corporeal and sensible reality, a kind of undifferentiated chaos, in which all the elements of the universe were mixed together. The Middle Platonists turned this third kind into an equivalent of Aristotelian matter. This was the framework in which the Chaldaean divinities came to be arranged.

The first divine group is made up of the following three entities: the Father, Hecate, and the Demiurge. There are, in fact, two Intellects, considered as masculine entities: one, who is the Father (Fr. 3, 7, etc.), contents himself with contemplating the Intelligibles; the other, who fashions the universe and all it contains, is the Demiurge (Fr. 5, 33). Between these two masculine entities is a feminine entity, Hecate (Fr. 32, 35), who both separates and unites them. This triad which comprises God is associated with several other important divinities, whose function is to account for their action on the various levels of reality. The most important among these realities are the Iynges, the Maintainers, and the Teletarchs.

In the *Oracles*, 'Iynge' (*Ἰνγξ*) is the name for divine beings endowed with various powers. The Iynges are presented as the thoughts or works of the Father (Fr. 77). From a Middle Platonic perspective therefore, they are the Forms which, as is well known, serve to 'design' the universe for the Chaldaeans. In the *Chaldaean Oracles*, the 'transmission of power', another way to talk about participation, takes place from the sources through the intermediary of 'channels' (*ochetoi*). These channels transport fire, which corresponds to the Intelligible; and this fire, assimilated to food for souls, which are made of fire, explains the constitution of bodies, which are considered as 'channels'. A cosmic order is thus established, intended to ensure the salvation of the human soul. Yet the maintenance of this order and the links that unite its parts are made possible by two very important classes of entities: the Assemblers (*Sunocheis*, Fr. 32, 80, 82, 177, 207) who maintain this order, and the Teletarchs (*Teletarchai*, Fr. 86, 177) who, in the context of that order, preside over the soul's reascent to the Intelligible.

Matter, the third principle, is presented metaphorically in terms of a bed and a hollow; it is situated below. The *Oracles'* description of it roughly corresponds to what one finds in the *Timaeus* and in the tradition that interpreted the *Timaeus* (Fr. 163): Platonic 'matter' plays the part of a receptacle.

These three principles must account for the universe in its totality and the realities it contains: bodies and souls. The class of souls displays tremendous diversity: the soul of the world, higher souls, human souls. In the *Chaldaean Oracles*, it seems that the World Soul is conceived as a function of the Myth of Er in book X of the *Republic* and of the *Timaeus*, for it includes two circles—the circle of the Same, which goes towards the right, that is, from east to west, and the circle of the Other, which goes towards the left, that is, towards the east—which is manipulated by Lachesis, the most venerable of the Muses, using both hands (*Theol. plat.* VI 12, 105.23–106.8).

In the *Chaldaean Oracles*, the World Soul is identified with Nature, which is itself associated with Fate and Hades (Fr. 54, 70, 102, 103, 134). By escaping Fate, the soul escapes the control of the demons who intervene in the sublunary regions and incite people to yield to their passions. In the same order of ideas, Nature's association with Hades is explained by the fact that Hades itself is related to the irrational drives of the body.

The world of the Chaldaeans was rich in higher souls, unfolding along an uninterrupted chain: archangels, angels, demons, heroes, disincarnate souls (Fr. 137, 138). The human soul is a piece of divine fire (Fr. 44). The *Chaldaean Oracles* insist on the descent of this fallen god constituted by each of the fallen souls (Fr. 115), which was first a mercenary, then a slave in the service of the body (Fr. 99, 110) upon which it is grafted (Fr. 142, 143). One fragment refers to sensation (Fr. 8) and another to intellection (Fr. 9, 20). Having returned above and emerged from forgetfulness (Fr. 109, 171), the soul will

be completely inebriated by the Intelligible (Fr. 97). In its reascent, it strips itself of the material envelopes, breaths, or vehicles (Fr. 104, 123, cf. 120), with which it had burdened itself. Only initiations will enable the human soul to carry out this divestiture and realize its reascent.

Sensible bodies are defined as 'particular channels' (*merikoi ochetoi*). The Demiurge is the source of all these channels, whose course and volume he controls by making use of measure: 'and it is for this reason that the Demiurge (= Zeus) is said to contain all the genera and to hold the source of species, insofar as he himself engenders all the particular channels, and irradiates upon them from himself all the measures of existence' (*Theol. plat.* V 30, 112.25–8; see Fr. 65.2). The allusions to Plato's *Timaeus*, interpreted with the help of Aristotle, are obvious.

A kinship has long been noted between what we can reconstitute of the thought of Numenius and the doctrine of the *Chaldaean Oracles*. The parallelism between Fr. 7 of the *Chaldaean Oracles* and Fr. 17 (des Places) of Numenius is astonishing. One may therefore imagine that the *Chaldaean Oracles* have been influenced by Numenius. Yet the argument could just as well be reversed, and one could imagine the contrary to be the case: Numenius may have been influenced by the *Chaldaean Oracles*. In both cases, it was easy for the Neoplatonic commentators to find Platonic elements in the *Chaldaean Oracles*.

### 10.3.3. The Agreement of the *Orphic Rhapsodies* and the *Chaldaean Oracles* with Plato's 'Theology'

Proclus, following Syrianus, was to draw a parallel between this drama with multiple twists and turns, in which the main actors are the gods, and an ontological system in which each order of realities comes to be inscribed at the level assigned to it within a rigid hierarchy. This is the procedure that we find in the later Neoplatonists, particularly in Damascius and Simplicius. Here there is a parallel between the comparisons between the Neoplatonic system on the one hand and the *Orphic Rhapsodies* and the *Chaldaean Oracles* on the other, as far as the gods and demons are concerned.

Proposition 114 of the *Elements of Theology* gives the following definition of a 'god': 'Every god is a self-complete henad and every self-complete henad is a god.' It is thus the perfection of a god's unity that defines it, and, reciprocally, all that displays a perfect unity is a god. Thus, all the gods are attached to the One-Good, which is considered the supreme god. Nevertheless, one may distinguish two major groups of gods: the gods that are separate from the world correspond to the first three levels (intelligible, intelligible-intellective, and intellective), while the gods of the world correspond to the next three levels (hypercosmic, hypercosmic-encosmic, and encosmic).<sup>18</sup>



On the level of the soul, Proclus distinguishes between universal souls, that is, the World Soul (= Nature and Fate) and those that animate the celestial bodies, the higher souls (angels, demons, heroes), and human souls. Universal souls are gods, because they keep watch over the world in a unitary and transcendent way, whereas higher souls watch over it in a particular and pluralized way (*in Tim.* I 29.30–40.4). The group of higher souls is thus divided into three categories: first archangels and angels, then the companions of the gods known as demons (see Timotin 2012) and heroes. Each category fulfils a specific function, in conformity with its principle: the angelic species is linked to the intelligible, the demonic species features an analogy with life, and the heroic species proceeds by conversion and dispenses a life apt for great exploits (*Procl., in Tim.* III 165.12ff.).

The virtuosity of this linkage highlights the Neoplatonist commentators' desire to save the whole of Greek culture from the Christians (see Saffrey 1984, 1992b)—its philosophy as well as its mythology—and it takes us on a fascinating journey that would be too long to describe here. I will therefore restrict myself here to a reference to the summary table in Appendix I. From the One to matter, there is a close, continuous correspondence between the Platonic system on the one hand and Orphic and Chaldaean doctrines on the other.

#### 10.4. THE RITUALS

Proclus did not, however, restrict himself to acquiring information about the Orphic and Chaldaean doctrines and teaching them—he also did not hesitate to practise the rituals associated with them, as Marinus informs us in his *Proclus or On Happiness*. As Porphyry did for Plotinus (in the *V. Plot.* and *Sent.* 32), Marinus wanted to show that Proclus was not only a master for his disciples, but also an example given to his disciples as far as virtue is concerned. Marinus distinguishes six degrees of virtues: natural, moral, civic, purificatory, contemplative, and theurgical (Brisson 2004), and above these he places 'those that are even more elevated, since they are henceforth beyond the human condition' (*V. Proc.* § 3.5–6).<sup>19</sup>

It is in this context that Marinus associates the practice of Orphic rituals with those of the purificatory virtues. Proclus carries out rituals intended to purify himself, that is, to separate as much as possible the life of his soul from that of his body (*V. Proc.* § 18.25–34).

By easing his physical pains, Proclus prevented his body from interfering with the activity of his soul. The practice of purificatory virtues was not pursued for its own sake, for it was to lead to the contemplative virtues, those of the professor and the exegete. Writing commentaries intended to track down the correspondences between the *Chaldaean Oracles* and the

philosophical system attributed to Plato already constituted, as such, a religious act or prayer in the Neoplatonic context (Brisson 2000b). As Marinus explains in his *Life of Proclus* (§ 28), however, Proclus, as a Platonic philosopher, did not stop at contemplative virtues, for he also practised the theurgical virtues.<sup>20</sup> What is important to note is that, in the general context of the *Chaldaean Oracles*, the participation of the sensible in the intelligible was not merely a theoretical, but also a practical matter. This is why he practised a large number of Chaldaean rituals. These rituals could be purificatory, and thus akin to the Orphic rituals.

In short, through his teaching, in which he sought to place Plato's scientific theology in harmony with all the other theologies, particularly Orphic and Chaldaean, and by the practice of the cognate rituals, Proclus sought to defend Greek culture against the hegemony of the Christians, who wished to eradicate pagan culture. Proclus and his side lost the game. But the skeleton of that magnificent edifice was to become the framework of the theologies and the great philosophical systems that were to develop until today, throughout the history of the Mediterranean countries and of Europe.<sup>21</sup>

## NOTES

1. This chapter was translated by Michael Chase.
2. On all this, see Saffrey and Westerink (1968–97: I, pp. lxxv–lxxxix).
3. On the history of the Neoplatonic School at Athens, see Brisson (2008).
4. On this transformation, see Saffrey (1996).
5. Sheppard (1980). These four types of theological discourse are enumerated and explained not only in the *Commentary on the Republic* I 84.26 and II 8.8–14, but also in the *Theol. plat.* I 4 and in the *Commentary on the Parmenides* I 646.2–647.18.
6. Here Socrates speaks under the inspiration of the Muses.
7. They contain an exposition in mathematical terms and a teaching on the basis of ethical and physical reasoning.
8. When interpreted allegorically, their myths reveal the divine principles.
9. See Ch. 8 in this volume on mathematics.
10. Orpheus is not a real poet, like Homer or Hesiod, but a mythical one. He was said to have taken part in the expedition of the Argonauts, which took place well before the Trojan War (Apollonius of Rhodes, *Argonautica* I 32). It was therefore believed that Homer had taken his inspiration from Orpheus, who therefore had to be much older than Hesiod. Although of Thracian origin through his father, the Greeks described him as 'Greek' because his mother was Mnemosyne, one of the Muses. A *Theogony* was attributed to Orpheus, which must have been known to Plato and Aristotle, some verses of which are commented upon in the Derveni Papyrus. Yet this theogony was rewritten in a Middle Platonic context

under the title *Sacred Discourse in 24 Rhapsodies*, and it was this Platonized version that was cited by the Neoplatonists to prove the agreement between Plato and Orpheus.

11. For a history of allegorical interpretation in antiquity, see Brisson (1996). For the allegorical interpretation in Proclus, see also Ch. 2 in this volume.
12. See also in *Tim.* III 161.1–6, and in *Eucl.* 22.11–14.
13. See Baltes (1972). Cf. also Ch. 7 in this volume.
14. *Enn.* IV 3 [27] 12.1–5, see also IV 8 [6] 8.1–4 and VI 4 [22] 14.17–22. On Proclus' rejection of the doctrine of the undescended soul and its consequences, see also Chs 6 and 11 in this volume.
15. See the introduction to Brisson and Segonds (1996).
16. Fr. 71a, 79, 81 Kern = Frr. 119, 116, 130, 129 I, 134, 136 Bernabé.
17. The *Chaldaean Oracles* are cited according to des Places (1971). There is an equivalent in English: see Majercik (1989). For the commentaries of Psellus, one must now use O'Meara (1989: 126–48). The main works on the *Chaldaean Oracles* are Kroll (1894), Lewy (1956), and Tardieu (1980).
18. For these different levels of divine reality, see the comprehensive scheme in Appendix I.
19. On the Neoplatonic scale of virtues, see Brisson (2006) and also Ch. 13 in this volume.
20. On Proclus' views on theurgy, see Ch. 11 in the present work.
21. For Proclus' influence on the great philosophies of the West, see Ch. 15 in this volume.

# Theurgy in the Context of Proclus’ Philosophy

*Robbert M. van den Berg*

## 11.1. INTRODUCTION

All Neoplatonism is religious. Neoplatonic metaphysics refers to the various levels of reality that it distinguishes as ‘divine’ and ‘god(s)’. Neoplatonic ethics, taking its lead from the digression in the *Theaetetus* (176a–d), identifies the ideal of becoming like God (*homoiôsis theôi*) as the ultimate form of happiness (*eudaimonia*) and the goal of human life.<sup>1</sup> This ‘becoming like God’ takes the form of an ascent through the various divine ranks until the highest God has been reached. Not all Neoplatonism is equally ritualistic, however. According to a famous observation by Damascius

[T.1] some give place of pride to philosophy, as do Porphyry and Plotinus and many other philosophers, some to the hieratic arts, as do Iamblichus and Syrianus and Proclus and all the adepts of the hieratic art. (Dam., in *Phd.* I 172.1–3)

This hieratic art (*hieratikê technê*) more or less coincides with theurgy (*theourgia*), a term which originates in the so-called *Chaldaean Oracles*. These oracles were reportedly delivered by the two Chaldaeans (i.e. magicians), father and son, who were both named Julian, during the reign of Marcus Aurelius. Since they were assumed to have been inspired by Plato himself, Proclus and his school held them in high esteem. Literally, ‘theurgy’ means something like ‘divine works’ (*theia erga*), in particular the construction of animated statues and the elevation (*anagôgê*) of the soul of the initiand to God.<sup>2</sup> The original meaning of the word is disputed. It has been suggested, for example, that the word *theourgia* (*θεουργία*) refers to the making (*ergazomai*) of gods (by animating statues or deifying human souls), to the theurgist’s claim that he works on gods, or, alternatively, to the claim that the gods work through the theurgist.<sup>3</sup> Be this as it may, it is evident that Proclus understands theurgy first and foremost in opposition to theology. Whereas theology

consists of *logoi*, words, concerning the gods, theurgy is about *erga*, ritual acts that allow the theurgist to attract and benefit from divine powers.<sup>4</sup> The theurgist might use these powers to avert all kinds of evils (sickness, earthquakes, droughts) that threaten our physical existence, but for Proclus and other Neoplatonists the most important function of theurgy was to free the human soul from this physical existence and elevate it to the divine.

To an earlier generation of scholars, theurgy was an offensive element in later Neoplatonism because it was perceived as a lapse from rational philosophy to obscure irrationalism, best passed over in silence if possible.<sup>5</sup> This attitude has now given way to the appreciation of theurgy as an important and characteristic element of the Athenian Neoplatonic School. What is more, Proclus' version of theurgy is a far less irrational affair than one might at first be inclined to think. As I shall demonstrate in this chapter, for Proclus, theurgy and philosophy are intimately intertwined, as appears from the fact that he makes theurgy bear on such diverse aspects of his philosophical thought as his metaphysics of causation (section 11.2), his psychology (section 11.3), his theology (sections 11.4–11.5), and his ethics (section 11.6). In the first and largest part of this chapter (11.2–11.5) we shall concentrate especially on the theoretical side of Proclean theurgy, in the second part (11.6–11.7) we shall also pay attention to its praxis.<sup>6</sup>

## 11.2. THEURGIC STATUES AND THE METAPHYSICS OF CAUSATION

Proclus understands the ethical imperative of 'becoming like God' and theurgic practices against the background of his metaphysics. Proclean metaphysics distinguishes three phases in the process of causation. A product emanates (*proodos*) from its cause. Yet at the same time it has to remain (*menein*) in its cause, for a product that is no longer connected to its cause has nothing in common with it and hence ceases to be its product (*El. theol.* § 35). Since everything strives after the good, i.e. its perfection, the emanated product will revert upon (*epistrophê*) its cause, which, since it is more perfect than its product, represents the good for its product.<sup>7</sup> Since all things ultimately derive from the One, the One is at the same time the ultimate Good to which all things seek to return (*El. theol.* § 12). The Neoplatonists identify this One with their highest God. Proclus thus understands 'becoming like God' as a return to the One. To call the One the ultimate cause, and hence the ultimate goal of all things, however, is to put things a bit too simply. Proclus distinguishes between the One, which transcends all things and hence cannot be participated in, and the Henads, i.e. participable representatives of the One that somehow remain united in the One.<sup>8</sup> Just as the One is God, the Henads are

the Gods. From the Henads proceed series of causation (*seirai*) that consist of things that participate in the Henad at the top of their series.

Procession implies likeness (*homoiôsis*): 'all procession is accomplished through a likeness of the secondary to the primary' (Procl., *El. theol.* § 29; tr. Dodds). It is precisely this sort of likeness that makes theurgy possible. As Proclus points out in the short treatise *On the Hieratic Art* (also known by the Latin title *De sacrificio et magia*), likeness joins things with one another (*De sacr.* 148.23–149.1), which results in a link of mutual sympathy (*sumpatheia*) between members of the same series. Because of it, products feel attracted to and revert upon their causes higher up in the causal series. In the series of Helios (Sun), for example, we find various lower divine manifestations of Helios, including, at a fairly low level, the sun itself, as well as people with a sun-like soul and even sun-like animals, plants, and stones. An example of a sun-like animal par excellence is the cock, as appears from the fact that it greets the rising sun every morning. As an example of sun-like flowers, Proclus mentions the heliotrope, a flower that follows the course of the sun, and the lotus, which opens its leaves at sunrise and closes them at sunset. In a similar fashion there is something like a sun-stone, which imitates the sun by means of its radiance. Proclus interprets the movements of these plants as their attempts to revert back upon their cause and as their forms of worship. The—admittedly to us inaudible—sound that the heliotrope makes when it moves is its hymn to the Sun, the opening and closing of the flower of a lotus may be compared to a human being who opens and closes his mouth when singing a hymn in praise of the gods.<sup>9</sup> In short, to Proclus, any form of reversion (*epistrophê*), however humble, is a form of worship.

Priests put this intimate link of sympathy between divine causes and humble objects such as animals, plants, and stones to good use when they construct statues of the gods from materials that are sympathetic with them. Such materials are known as symbols (*sumbola*) or passwords (*sunthêmata*). They may be attached to the outside of the statue or hidden within it. It is because of these symbols he is sympathetic with that a god is attracted to a statue and subsequently animates it.<sup>10</sup> In the same way, symbols for which certain evil powers have an antipathy may be used to drive those powers away. Brimstone and seawater, which both 'partake in the empyrean (fiery) power', for example, are used in ceremonies of purification.<sup>11</sup>

Symbols do not only play a role in the construction of animated statues, they also play a crucial role in the elevation of the human soul to the gods. According to Plato, *Tim.* 29c–31a, the Demiurge made the cosmos as an image (*eikôn*) of the intelligible living being (the Forms). As we have just seen, a theurgic statue is made like the god it represents by means of symbols. In a similar way the Demiurge uses *sumbola* to make the entire cosmos like the intelligible animal:

[T.2] And as a whole [the theurgic statue] has been made like (*ὁμοίωται*) the god whose image it is. For a theurgist who sets up a statue as a likeness to a certain

divine order fabricates the *sumbola* (σύμβολα) of its identity with reference to that order, acting as does the Demiurge when he makes a likeness by looking to its proper model.

(Procl., in *Parm.* IV 847.19–23; tr. Morrow and Dillon modified)<sup>12</sup>

Thus, the *sumbola* are best thought of as immanent Forms through which the particulars down here participate in the Forms in the intelligible realm and which make the particular beings what they are. Proclus quotes the following verses from the *Chaldaean Oracles* to demonstrate that the activity of the demiurgical Intellect consists in making likenesses (*aphomoiôtikê energeia*):

[T.3] For the Paternal Intellect has sown *sumbola* throughout the cosmos, / He who thinks the intelligible (τὰ νοητὰ νοεῖ). And these (intelligibles) are called inexpressible beauties.

(*Or. chald.* Fr. 108; quoted in Procl., in *Crat.* 52, 20.22–21.5)

Because the *sumbola* refer to the thoughts of the Father (i.e. the intelligible Forms), the theurgists claim that these allow us to reascend to the Father from whom we once descended, provided that we manage to remember them. They thus function as passwords:

[T.4] But the Paternal Intellect does not receive the will of it (the soul) / until it (the soul) emerges from forgetfulness and speaks a word, / remembering the pure, parental password (σύνθημα). (*Or. chal.* Fr. 109; tr. Majercik modified)

The Chaldaean *sumbola*, then, have a double function: on the one hand, they are the formative principles of the cosmos and on the other offer the human soul an escape from this material world. Proclus interprets this in the terms of his theory of causation. As formative principles, the *sumbola* make it possible for things to proceed from the gods (Henads) while at the same time remaining in them; as passwords, they allow the human soul to revert upon them:

[T.5] All things, therefore, both remain in and revert to the gods, receiving this ability from them and obtaining in their very being a double password (διττὰ συνθήματα), the one in order to remain there, the other so that what proceeds forth can return. And it is possible to observe these not only in souls, but also in the soul-less things that follow them.

(Procl., in *Tim.* I 210.11–16; tr. Runia and Share modified)

The ‘soul-less things’ refer to such objects as the sun-stone, the brimstone, and seawater that Proclus mentions in *On the Hieratic Art*. In the end, however, he is far more interested in the human soul and its reversion. Proclus compares the recollection of the passwords, necessary for the human soul’s reversion, to the Platonic *anamnesis* of the Forms as described, for example, in the myth of the winged charioteer in the *Phaedrus* (cf. Procl., *Phil. chald.* Fr. 5, 211.17–22), about which more will be stated later in the chapter. There is,

however, an important difference between the two: the theurgist uses these passwords in rituals whereas philosophical *anamnesis* does not involve rituals. For reasons we shall now explore, Proclus and Iamblichus, against Plotinus and Porphyry, maintained that philosophical *anamnesis* by itself was not enough to accomplish our return to the intelligible. Theurgic ritual was also needed.

### 11.3. THEURGY AND THE DESCENDED SOUL

The controversy between Plotinus on the one hand and Iamblichus and Proclus on the other on the relative merits of philosophy and theurgy goes back to differing views on the relation between the human soul and the divine Intellect. Plotinus had defended the—as he himself knew only too well—audacious doctrine that the human soul never descends from the level of divine Intellect in its entirety, known today in scholarly literature as the doctrine of the undescended soul.<sup>13</sup> According to Plotinus, part of us always remains located in the realm of Intellect. All a philosopher has to do when he wants to return to the level of Intellect is focus his attention on the activity of that part. Thus, the philosopher does not need to resort to theurgy to ascend to the level of the divine Intellect. In a way we are already there. Porphyry, who like Plotinus gave pride of place to philosophy, admitted that theurgic rituals were useful means to purify the soul from all sorts of bodily defilement that oppose the return of the soul to the metaphysical realm. This, however, was more or less the extent of it. The actual ascent was the result of philosophical, i.e. some sort of intellectual as opposed to ritual, activity on the part of the philosopher.

Iamblichus forcefully rejected Plotinus' doctrine of the undescended soul. Proclus, in a passage in his *Commentary on the Timaeus*, sides with 'the divine Iamblichus' against 'Plotinus and the great Theodorus' on the matter of the undescended soul. If, Iamblichus argues, our best element is perpetually happy since it is forever contemplating the Forms and in contact with things divine, how is it that the rest of our soul is not also in a constant state of happiness? In other words, if Plotinus were right, there would be no need for us to strive for the ideal of *homoiôsis theôi* and happiness, for we would already have attained this ideal. We are, however, clearly not yet there; therefore, Plotinus is wrong.<sup>14</sup> We need the assistance of the gods to bring about the contemplation of the Forms which consists in some form of illumination. Theurgy helps us to obtain this divine assistance. In an instructive passage in his *Commentary on the Parmenides* Proclus writes:

[T.6] The transcendent Forms exist by themselves;  
 What exists by itself and of itself is not in us;  
 What is not in us is not on the level of our knowledge;  
 What is not on the level of our knowledge is unknowable by our faculty of knowledge;



Conclusion: the transcendent Forms are unknowable by our faculty of knowledge.

They may, then, be contemplated only by divine Intellect (*νοῦς*). This is so for all Forms, but especially for those that are beyond the intellectual (*νοεροὶ*) gods; for neither sense-perception, nor cognition based on opinion, nor pure reason, nor intellectual cognition of our type serves to connect the soul with those Forms, but apparently only illumination from the intellectual gods renders us capable of joining ourselves to those intelligible-and-intellectual (*νοητοὶ καὶ νοεροὶ*) Forms, as some inspired person says. And it is for this reason, indeed, that the Socrates of the *Phaedrus*, as we said before, compares the contemplation of them to ‘initiations’ and ‘mystery rites’ and ‘visions’, conducting our souls up to the ‘subcelestial vault’, and the ‘heaven’ itself, and the ‘supra-celestial’ place, calling the visions of those same Forms perfect and unwavering apparitions and also ‘simple’ and ‘happy’.

(Procl., in *Parm.* IV 949.11–31; tr. Morrow and Dillon, modified)

The ‘inspired person’ to whom Proclus here refers is probably Iamblichus. He may have had a famous passage in mind from *The Reply of the Master Abamon to the Letter of Porphyry to Anebo*, better known today as *De Mysteriis*, in which Iamblichus, under the pseudonym of Abamon, answers Porphyry’s critical questions about theurgy. Iamblichus categorically denies that philosophical thought could ever join us to the divine:

[T.7] [I]t is not thought that joins theurgists to the gods. Indeed what then, would hinder those who are contemplative philosophers (*τοὺς θεωρητικῶς φιλοσοφοῦντας*) from enjoying a theurgic union with the gods? But the situation is not so: it is the accomplishment of rituals (*ἔργα*) not to be divulged and beyond all conception, and the power of unutterable symbols, understood solely by the gods, which establishes theurgic union.

(Iambl., *De myst.* II 11, 96.13–97.2; tr. Clarke et al., modified)

Since, according to Iamblichus and Proclus, it is theurgic ritual that unites us with the gods (the fulfilment of our ascent), they had placed the excellences regarding theurgy at the top of the Neoplatonic ‘scale of virtues’ (i.e. forms of excellence), thus stressing that it surpasses all other activities, including philosophy. In section 11.6 we shall discuss this scale of virtues in greater detail.

#### 11.4. THEURGY AND PLATONIC THEOLOGY: THE MYTH OF THE WINGED CHARIOTEER

One place where Plato had tried to convey an impression of what the contemplation of the Forms is like is the myth of the winged charioteer in the *Phaedrus* (246a–249d) to which Proclus (T.6) refers. In his interpretation

of this passage in *Platonic Theology* IV, Proclus explicitly connects the 'mystic rites', 'initiations', and 'visions' of the myth from the *Phaedrus* to the theurgic rituals of the *Chaldaean Oracles*. It is to this discussion that we shall now turn. According to the myth of the winged charioteer, the Olympian gods led by Zeus travel upwards on their chariots to the 'subcelestial vault' (ἡ ὑπουράνιος ἀψίς: *Phdr.* 247b1) to contemplate the Forms situated above the heavens in the so-called 'supra-celestial place' (ὁ ὑπερουράνιος τόπος: *Phdr.* 247c3) which is impossible to describe. The human souls try to follow them as best they possibly can. If they succeed, they will, with the gods, enjoy visions of 'radiant Beauty' (κάλλος λαμπρόν: *Phdr.* 250b5–6). Plato calls this journey of the human souls and their ultimate contemplation of the Forms 'the most blessed of all mysteries' (τῶν τελετῶν μακαριωτάτην: *Phdr.* 250b8–c1). Driving home his point with an elaborate pun, Plato stresses that souls who have achieved this 'highest, most perfect level of initiation' (τελέους τελετὰς τελούμενος: *Phdr.* 249c7–8) will themselves be 'truly perfect' (τέλεως ὄντως).

Plato's explicit comparison of the contemplation of the Forms to an initiation into the most perfect of all mysteries allows Proclus both to connect this passage from the *Phaedrus* to the ritual activities of the theurgist and to argue that the theurgic virtues are the most perfect of all.<sup>15</sup> His interpretation of the myth from the *Phaedrus*, presented schematically in Table 11.1 below, is a complex one since Proclus relates various elements of the myth to various levels of his detailed metaphysical system. Zeus and the other Olympian gods are intellective or *noeric* gods (*noeroi theoi*), because they lead the lesser gods, daemons, and souls towards the intellective (*noeric*) contemplation of the intelligible (*noetic*) Forms. Hence Proclus calls them leader-gods (*hêgemonikoi theoi*).<sup>16</sup> He assumes furthermore that we have to postulate intellection (*noësis*) as an intermediary between this intellective (*noeric*) contemplation and its intelligible (*noetic*) object: here we find the *noetic-and-noeric* gods (*noëtoi kai noeroi theoi*), i.e. in the subcelestial vault, the heavens, and the supra-celestial place of the *Phaedrus*. This is the intellection 'through which all the gods as well as the souls obtain a vision of the intelligible (Forms)' (Procl., *Theol. plat.* IV 5, 21.27–22.8). There is, however, an important difference between the intellection enjoyed by the gods and that enjoyed by human souls. The leader-gods are Intellects, whereas the human souls, because they had completely descended from the level of Intellect, are not. Souls have intellect because of the illumination (*ellampsis*) they receive from the *noeric* leader-gods.<sup>17</sup> Because of this illumination, the human souls are able to contemplate the Forms, i.e. to partake in the intellection of the *noetic-and-noeric* gods.

Proclus stresses the correspondence between Plato's myth and 'those who hold the highest ranks in the celebration of the mysteries', i.e. the theurgists.<sup>18</sup> In 'the most venerable of all mysteries', i.e. in the theurgic rituals, the souls are shown in 'a direct revelation' the 'perfect and unshakable visions' of the

**Table 11.1.** Proclus’ Interpretation of the *Phaedrus* Myth and the Neoplatonic Scale of Virtues

Plato, <i>Phaedrus</i> (myth of the winged charioteer)	Proclus, <i>Platonic Theology</i>	Marinus, <i>Life of Proclus</i>
Zeus and the other Olympians	<i>Noeric level:</i> The so-called leader-gods elevate (through illumination) the human souls that belong to their series towards divine intuitive intellection (as opposed to ordinary human discursive rationality).	<i>Philosophical virtues:</i> Contemplative philosophy in the manner of the divine Intellect as opposed to ordinary human discursive philosophy.
Supra-celestial place Heaven Subcelestial vault	<i>Noetic-and-noeric level (Noësis):</i> This level coincides with the ‘paternal harbour’ (i.e. escape from the evils of the material world) and is home to the <i>teletarchai</i> , the Chaldaean gods that ‘illuminate us, not by words but by (theurgical) rituals’.	<i>Theurgical virtues:</i> Proclus practises theurgy in imitation of divine Providence ( <i>Pro- noia</i> , i.e. lit. <i>before Intellect/Nous</i> ), warding off all sorts of evils, e.g., the sickness of Asclepigeneia, an earthquake, a spell of drought.
Radiant Beauty	<i>Noetic level:</i> Silence; cf. the silent hymn (‘Fire-song’) to the Father in Proclus, <i>Philosophy from the Chaldaean Oracles</i> : this ‘song’ is ‘neither a composition of words ( <i>logoi</i> ), nor a performance of rituals’, i.e. this level surpasses theurgical ritual.	<i>Unnamed, supra-human virtues:</i> Marinus explicitly passes over these in silence, possibly apart from Proclus’ oracular utterances about a ‘supra-celestial light’ and his future destiny after death.

*Phaedrus*.<sup>19</sup> Proclus identifies his *noetic-and-noeric* gods with the *teletarchai* of the *Chaldaean Oracles*, literally (the gods who) preside over the initiations that render the initiand perfect (one is reminded of the laborious wordplay in the *Phaedrus*). Proclus stresses that these gods ‘illuminate us, not by words but by rituals’ (οὐ λόγοις ἀλλ’ ἔργοις φωτίσαντες).<sup>20</sup> Proclus thus draws a sharp contrast between philosophy, which consists of words, and theurgy, which consists of ritual acts. These rituals, Proclus continues, moors the soul in ‘the paternal harbour’ (ὁ πατρικὸς ὄρμος), apparently a term from the *Chaldaean Oracles*. This ‘paternal harbour’ is the state in which we are filled with the intelligible Beauty that shines forth from the supra-celestial place. The word ‘harbour’ carries associations of salvation. The human soul is like a sailor who has been exposed to dangerous seas (the material realm) and who has now returned to the safety of the harbour (its metaphysical origin). According to Proclus, ‘the theurgists place all their hope for salvation’ on this whereas Plato,

in the *Phaedrus*, stresses that the souls who enjoy this will not be bothered anymore by the evils of the world of becoming and hence are truly happy.<sup>21</sup>

### 11.5. THE LIMITS OF THEURGY

At *Phdr.* 250c Plato refers to the contemplated Forms as 'perfect, and simple, and unshakable and blissful visions' (ὁλόκληρα δὲ καὶ ἀπλὰ καὶ ἀτρεμῇ καὶ εὐδαίμονα φάσματα). Seeing these is comparable to the final, most secret stage of the Eleusinian mysteries, that of the *epopteia*, the contemplation of secret symbols or divine epiphanies. Proclus deduces from this that there is yet another, final, stage of ascent after we have followed the leader-gods up to the supra-celestial place, namely, the mystical experience that results from these visions:

[T.8] For in that very place the mystical passwords (συνθήματα) of the Intelligible appear and the unknowable and unspeakable beauties<sup>22</sup> of the characters. For the 'initiation' and the '*epopteia*' are symbols of the unspeakable silence and of the unification with the intelligible which occurs by means of mystical visions. And this is the most amazing thing of all, the fact that Plato, moved by the gods themselves, anticipated the order of the theurgists to bury the body except for the head in the most mystical of rites. 'Being pure,' Plato says, 'and not entombed in this thing which we now carry around with us and call a body' (*Phdr.* 250c4–6), we obtained this most blessed initiation and highest initiation, being full of intelligible light. For the pure ray symbolically shines the intelligible light on us. Thus, we possess the life in the Intelligible, which is completely separated from the body. 'Raising the head of our charioteer toward the place outside' we are filled with the mysteries there and intelligible (*noetic*) silence (cf. *Phdr.* 248a2–3).

(Procl., *Theol. plat.* IV 9, 30.12–31.5;

tr. partly borrowed from John F. Finamore)

Proclus here refers to what has been called 'the concluding act of the principal Chaldaean sacrament', a ceremony in which the initiand has himself buried up to the head, thus symbolically killing himself. By doing so, the initiand separates himself completely from the body, which prevents his soul from uniting itself with the divine.<sup>23</sup> Proclus associates this ritual with the myth of the *Phaedrus*, according to which the human soul that follows its patron god most closely is able to raise his head and gaze upon what is outside heaven, i.e. the intelligible (*noetic*) realm that Proclus situates above the 'heaven' of the *noetic*-and-*noeric* gods. The *noetic* realm is associated with silence, for, as we have seen (section 11.4), the supra-celestial place cannot properly be described, and the symbols that are involved are 'unspeakable' and 'unknowable'.<sup>24</sup> The reason for this is that the purely intelligible gods are above the *noësis* (intellection) that characterizes the *noetic*-and-*noeric* gods. The intelligible gods thus do not practise

intellection, and neither do the souls that have reached this level. They are beyond any form of knowledge and its verbal expressions:

[T.9] The entire initiation does not take place through intellection or through judgment, but through the unitary silence that is superior to every form of activity involving knowledge. It is this silence, which Faith gives, which installs the souls in the unspeakable and unknowable class of the gods, not just the universal souls but also ours. (Procl., *Theol. plat.* IV 9, 31.12–16)

Because of the silence of the intelligible gods, Proclus assumes that theurgic ritual, which involves various incantations and the use of special divine names, is no longer effective (*in Crat.* § 71, 32.29–30).<sup>25</sup> Proclus remains explicitly silent about how this installation among the intelligible gods comes about, as do both Plato and the theurgists:

[T.10] And how next [i.e. after the vision of the supra-celestial place, RvdB] the souls are connected to the first intelligible gods, Plato does not reveal through words. For the connection with these is unspeakable and achieved through unspeakable means. This is exactly their opinion [i.e. that of the theurgists, RvdB] too, and through this class of gods the mystical unification with the intelligible and first causes comes about. (Procl., *Theol. plat.* IV 9, 28.24–29.2)

Because unification with these gods transcends all forms of knowledge, it is, in the end, literally a matter of Faith (*Pistis*), as Proclus briefly indicates in T.9 and discusses elsewhere in more detail. Faith is one member of the triad Truth, Love, and Faith that leads us to the gods.<sup>26</sup> Whereas knowledge consists in an imperfect activity, i.e. searching, Faith consists in closing one's eyes and surrendering oneself to the divine Light.<sup>27</sup> Even though, as we have seen, ritual is absent at this stage of the ascent, Proclus explicitly links Faith with the theurgic power (*theourgikê dunamis*).<sup>28</sup> The reason for this is probably that the ascent to the intelligible gods is a logical sequel to and culmination of the theurgic elevation of the soul towards the 'perfect, and simple, and unshakable and blissful visions'. These (cf. T.8) provide the soul with the symbols or passwords, analogous to the material symbols such as animals, plants, and stones in ordinary theurgic practices, which allow the soul to be united with the intelligible gods.

Proclus identifies the summit of the intelligible world with the so-called Father of the *Chaldaean Oracles*. Proclus describes this Father, a participated Henad that should not be confused with the One that is superior even to this Father, as 'the cause of all things'. Since he is the origin of all things, he is also the ultimate object of conversion and hence the God whom we should all strive to be like. As Proclus stresses in a passage in his *Philosophy from the Chaldaean Oracles*, to become like God is the ultimate form of worship, superior to both the words of philosophy and the rituals of theurgy:

[T.11] The hymn to the Father is not a composition of words (*λόγοι*), nor a performance of rituals (*ἔργα*). For he, who alone is imperishable, does not accept

a perishable hymn. We should not hope to persuade the master of true words with an empty wind of utterances, nor with a show of rituals that has been made artificially attractive. (Procl., *Phil. chald.* Fr. 2, 207.17–21)

He continues:

[T.12] Let us therefore consecrate this hymn to god; let us leave fleeting being; let us go to the true goal, to become exactly like him.

(Procl., *Phil. chald.* Fr. 2, 207.22–4)

This passage is known as the 'fire-song' because Proclus imagines that we become like God by becoming fire: 'Let us become fire; let us travel by way of fire' (*Phil. chald.* Fr. 2, 208.2). It is Proclus' metaphysical interpretation of the Chaldaean ritual of elevation in which fiery sun rays were invoked with which the soul of the initiand supposedly mingled and through which it could ascend and unify itself with the Father.<sup>29</sup> It is thus that the human soul returns whence it came.

#### 11.6. THEURGY IN MARINUS' BIOGRAPHY OF PROCLUS

So far, we have looked at theurgy mainly from a theoretical angle. The biography of Proclus by his pupil Marinus allows us to glimpse what theurgy was like in practice. Interestingly, Marinus presents the life of his hero Proclus as a continuous ascent on the Neoplatonic scale of virtues towards true happiness, i.e. the ultimate goal of life.<sup>30</sup> The various steps on this scale include both philosophy and theurgy. Marinus thus casts further light on the relation between theurgy and philosophy in Proclus' school. Neoplatonists ever since Plotinus have distinguished between the so-called political virtues and higher types of virtues. The political virtues (*politikai aretai*), discussed in Plato's *Politeia*, concern the embodied life, i.e. that of a soul that has not yet separated itself from the body. They include care for one's fellow citizens, i.e. to help them in the fashion of a benevolent politician (*euergetein*; Mar., *V. Proc.* § 14.12). Marinus will take up this aspect of the political virtues later on when he discusses the theurgic virtues.

The philosopher, however, must transcend embodied existence. As Socrates famously said in the *Phaedo*, all philosophy is a preparation for death and dying, i.e. for the separation of soul and body. Therefore, the next stage after the political virtues is the so-called purifying virtues (*kathartikai aretai*). The aim of these virtues is to purify, i.e. to separate the soul from the body. They bring about the 'flight from here' that, according to the *Theaetetus*, results in

becoming like god, as Marinus (*V. Proc.* § 18) explicitly observes. According to Marinus,

[T.13] Day and night he [Proclus] practised apotropaic rites, as well as ablutions and other purifying rites, sometimes Orphic and sometimes Chaldaean ones, and every month he resolutely went into the sea, at times even twice or three times in the same month. (Mar., *V. Proc.* § 18.26–30)

The Chaldaean rites refer to theurgic purifications.<sup>31</sup> Especially interesting in this respect is Proclus' habit of bathing in the sea: as we have seen, Proclus accorded special purifying powers to seawater because it would be antipathetic to evil powers. In this context Marinus also mentions Proclus' enthusiastic participation in all kind of religious festivals, both Greek and foreign, composing hymns as part of his participation. Some of these hymns have survived, and I will briefly discuss two of them in section 11.7. As we shall see, these hymns were also supposed to purify the soul of the worshipper and elevate it by theurgic means to the gods.

Once Proclus' soul had been purified from the body, at least to the extent possible in this life, it was free to practise the so-called contemplative virtues (*theôretikai aretai*; Mar., *V. Proc.* §§ 22–5). Marinus describes it as a sort of progress, comparable to the various steps in an initiation (*οἶονεὶ κατὰ βαθμὸν τινα τελεστικὸν προκόπτων*; *V. Proc.* § 22.2–3), a comparison that is intended both to evoke real initiations, not least the Chaldaean ones, and the philosophical initiation of the *Phaedrus* (see Table 11.1). These virtues consist in the intuitive contemplation of the Forms that are contained in the divine Intellect and are thus different from ordinary philosophical thought, which is discursive and proceeds by means of syllogisms. Quoting Plotinus *Enn.* I 2 [19] 6.19–24, Marinus describes it as the soul which 'is active in the direction of Intellect and God' (*πρὸς νοῦν καὶ θεὸν ἐνεργεῖν*; Mar., *V. Proc.* § 24.9–10). In other words, here we are at the *noeric* level, that of intellectual activity. According to Marinus, Proclus' contemplative virtues explain his deep insights into Greek and barbarian theology. He does not, however, connect these activities to any theurgic activities.

This is quite different at the next level. As will be remembered, Iamblichus had claimed that contemplative philosophy does not achieve theurgic union with the gods (T.7). That is why Iamblichus had placed theurgic virtues above the contemplative ones. In keeping with Iamblichus' doctrine, Marinus describes how Proclus, 'feeding on the divine Oracles themselves, proceeded to the highest virtues accessible to the human soul, those which the divine Iamblichus gave the excellent name "theurgic"' (Mar., *V. Proc.* § 26.19–23). Why 'theurgic' (*theourgikai aretai*)? Marinus does not say so explicitly, but from his long list of the theurgic activities performed by Proclus (Mar., *V. Proc.* §§ 28–29), including such miracles as preventing earthquakes, causing rain in times of drought, and healing the sick, it is apparent that Marinus

associates Proclus' masterful command of theurgic rituals with these virtues.<sup>32</sup> He dwells especially on Proclus' healing of the little girl Asclepigeneia whom the doctors had given up on. Proclus and his friend Pericles went to the sanctuary of Asclepius, 'which the city was at that time still fortunate to have and keep up' and prayed 'in a very ancient manner', as a result of which the girl suddenly recovered. What is especially interesting about this story is that it illustrates that theurgy concerns the correct performance of a ritual in the right manner and at the right place. The success of Proclus' prayers depends in part on the fact that he prayed to Asclepius in a traditional way and at a holy place that was properly maintained.

Marinus presents Proclus' theurgical knowledge as something very precious. He acquired it from Asclepigeneia, the daughter of Plutarch of Athens (not to be confused with the miraculously cured girl Asclepigeneia just mentioned), who alone had preserved the theurgical wisdom of the great Nestorius, the hierophant of the Eleusinian mysteries (Mar., *V. Proc.* § 28.13–15). As impressive as Proclus' performance as a rainmaker or healer may have been, Marinus' celebration of Proclus' theurgical achievements raises the question why he associates them with Proclus' ascent to a level above that of *noeric* contemplation, to that of the *noetic*-and-*noeric* gods (i.e. intelligible-and-intellective gods).<sup>33</sup> Marinus explains that Proclus, because of his study of the *Chaldaean Oracles*, progressed

[T.14] to an even greater and more perfect degree of virtue, the theurgic one. And no longer did he limit himself to contemplative virtue nor did he live according to just one of the two characteristic properties of the divine beings, i.e. he did not just engage in *noeric* activity and reach out to the superior beings, but already he exercised providence (*πρόνοια*) towards the inferior and not in the manner of a politician which we mentioned above. (Mar., *V. Proc.* § 28.2–8)

The Neoplatonists etymologized *pronoia* (*πρόνοια*, or providence) as something that comes before (*προ-*) Intellect (*νοῦς*). Thus, since Proclus' soul had risen to an even more perfect stadium (*teleôteran*) than that of the contemplative virtues of Intellect—one is reminded again of the elaborate pun on *teletê* (*τελετή*), perfection/initiation in *Phdr.* 249c7–8—he was in a position to exercise providential care in a divine manner, as opposed to that of a human politician who had mastered the political virtues. We should also note that, by doing so, Proclus had become even more like the divine, for now he had acquired both qualities that characterize the divine, not just the one of *noeric* activity.<sup>34</sup> As a result of this, Proclus had become beloved by the gods, as became evident from the many divine epiphanies that Proclus enjoyed. Athena, Asclepius, Pan, and the Mother of the gods were all on friendly terms with our hero (Mar., *V. Proc.* §§ 30–3).

As we have seen, in *Platonic Theology* IV Proclus assumes that there is a degree of virtue even above that of the *noetic*-and-*noeric* level, which consists



of the installation of the soul among the intelligible gods and the ascent of the soul to the Father. Marinus refers to these supreme virtues only very briefly when, at the beginning of his biography, he lists all the successive classes of virtues that he will discuss in connection with Proclus. About the class of virtues that is even superior to the so-called theurgic virtues, however, Marinus announces that he will keep silent (*σιωπήσαντες*) because they are above the human condition (Mar., *V. Proc.* § 3.1–7). As will be remembered, Proclus (T.10) claims that both the theurgists and Plato in the *Phaedrus* rightly keep silent about the union with the intelligible which takes place by surrendering oneself to the light or fire that appears in the supra-celestial place. It is for this reason, I suggest, that Marinus too keeps silent about these virtues. Or does he? Marinus mentions that, because of his theurgic virtues, Proclus was able to foretell the future. About his own destiny he uttered some obscure verses in the style of the *Chaldaean Oracles*, prophesying that he would go ‘there where the supra-celestial light (*ὑπερουρανίη αἴγλη*) flies around’, i.e. to the *noetic* realm.<sup>35</sup> According to verses he uttered on another occasion ‘my soul has arrived, breathing in the power of fire’ (Mar., *V. Proc.* § 28.30–3), a phrase that calls to mind the ‘fire-song’ and the return to the ultimate source of all things. Since all of this was still in the future when Proclus made these predictions, we may assume that Proclus (and Marinus) believed that he would eventually reach the highest degree of virtue. Because this level of virtue was supposedly ‘unspeakable’, Marinus does not discuss it explicitly but only hints at it.

### 11.7. PROCLUS’ HYMNS AND THEURGY

As we have seen, everything worships the divine, including plants like the heliotrope, which beats the air by moving around, thus producing a hymn to Helios. Proclus too composed hymns, as Marinus remarks, some of which have been preserved. They show us theurgy in action. Let us end our discussion of Proclus on theurgy by looking at some passages from them.<sup>36</sup> Proclus’ hymns address especially those gods he expects can help him escape the evil realm of matter and elevate him to the safety of the paternal harbour. His hymn to Helios is a good illustration in point. Helios is, of course, the most important of the heavenly bodies. As such, he is worshipped by the heliotrope and the cock. To Proclus, however, Helios is more. He is also one of the so-called leader-gods, the gods that elevate the human soul to the divine Intellect by illuminating them (cf. T.6). More particularly, according to the theurgists, the human soul ascends through the solar rays to the heavenly realm. This elevating function of Helios is Proclus’ reason for invoking him, as already appears from the first verse in which Proclus greets Helios as ‘the king of

noeric fire' (πυρὸς νοεροῦ βασιλεῦ); Helios is the 'dispenser of light' (v. 2: φάους ταμίᾱ) who fills 'everything with your intellect-awaking providence' (v. 3). He thus rescues the human souls who 'have fallen under the yoke of the body/with the result that they forget the bright-shining court of the lofty Father' (vv. 31–2), the latter being equivalent to the 'paternal harbour', from the evil daemons who try to retain them in 'the gulf of heavy-resounding life' (v. 30). Therefore, Proclus asks Helios 'the uplifter of souls' (v. 34: ψυχῶν ἀναγωγεῦ) to illuminate him too: 'may you always through your evil-averting help/give holy light rich with blessings to my soul' (vv. 39–40).

In another hymn, Proclus addresses Athena. Athena is, of course, the patron deity of philosophy who personally led Proclus to the philosophical life (Mar., *V. Proc.* § 30.1–4). She is, however, also another leader-god whose assistance may be invoked through the manipulation of *symbola*. This is precisely what Proclus does in this hymn when he invokes her as the goddess who 'obtained the Acropolis on the high-crested hill/a *symbolon*, mistress, of the top of your great series' (vv. 21–2). The Athenian acropolis is a *symbolon* both in the sense that the elevated Acropolis represents Athena's top position in her series<sup>37</sup> and in the sense that it is a theurgic *symbolon* comparable to the animals, plants, and stones which serve as means to attract the divine power that presides over their series. It is for this reason that Proclus lived in a house at the foot of the Acropolis (cf. Mar., *V. Proc.* § 29.1–39). As part of his discussion of the epiphanies that Proclus enjoyed because of his theurgic virtues, Marinus recounts how, when the Christian authorities were about to remove a cultic statue of Athena from the Acropolis, she appeared to him, ordering him to prepare his house to receive her. 'For Lady Athena, she said, wants to stay with you' (Mar., *V. Proc.* § 30.1–11). To Proclus and his school then, the successful theurgist was someone who walked with the gods because he had managed to become godlike himself.<sup>38</sup>

## NOTES

1. On Proclus and the Platonic ideal of becoming like god, see also Ch. 13 in this volume.
2. For the terms *ἱερατικὴ τέχνη* and *θεουργία*, see Lewy (2011<sup>3</sup>: 461–6).
3. For the various interpretations of the word 'theurgy', see e.g. Blumenthal (1993).
4. For the opposition words/deeds, see e.g. Procl., *Theol. plat.* IV 26 (discussed in section 11.4) and Procl., *Phil. chald.* Fr. 2 (discussed in section 11.5). Cf. the famous remark by Iamblichus (*De myst.* II 11) that theurgy brings about union with the gods through an 'accomplishment of rituals' (T.7).
5. It is telling that even E. R. Dodds, who was the first in the English-speaking world to take a scholarly interest in theurgy, added his sympathetic account of it as an appendix to his famous book, *The Greeks and the Irrational* (1951: 283–311).

6. For an alternative approach to Proclean theurgy that focuses more on actual theurgic rituals and less on the relation between Proclus' philosophy and his understanding of theurgy, see e.g. Van Liefferinge (1999: 243–80). Unfortunately, the most interesting discussion of theurgy in Proclus by Tanaseanu-Döbler (2013: 186–257) only came to my attention after the present chapter had been completed.
7. For a more elaborate account of these three phases in the process of causation, see also Ch. 3 in this volume.
8. On the One and the Henads in Proclus' philosophy, see also Ch. 4 in this volume.
9. Procl., *De sacr.* 148.10–18 (on the heliotrope) and 149.12–18 (on the lotus).
10. Procl., *De sacr.* 150.24–151.9; for the construction of such a statue, see e.g. *Or. chald.* Fr. 224.
11. Procl., *De sacr.* 151.10–13. As we have seen, Proclus in *On the Hieratic Art* associates theurgy and symbolism with likeness. When discussing literary symbolism, however—which for Proclus is related to theurgical symbolism—he observes that symbolic poetry may represent things even by their opposites (*in Remp.* I 198.18–19; cf. Ch. 14 in this volume). The two passages only seemingly contradict each other. As Proclus explains elsewhere (*in Crat.* § 56, 24.17–25.7) symbols, both poetical and theurgical ones, are not slavish copies or reflections (ἐῖδωλα) of the entities to which they refer, nor do poets and theurgists pick their symbols completely arbitrarily. There is a certain analogous relationship between the symbol and its object, i.e. in some important respect(s) they resemble each other but certainly not in all. For example, in the text referred to, Proclus writes of seawater as a symbol that partakes of the empyrean (fiery) power. Water and fire are in many respects opposites; seawater is, however, analogous to the empyrean power in respect of its purifying potential.
12. Cf. Procl., *in Remp.* II 212.20–213.12 for another, detailed, comparison of the cosmos to an animated statue.
13. See e.g. Plot., *Enn.* IV 8 [6] 8.1–3.
14. Procl., *in Tim.* III 333.28–334.14 = Iamblichus, *in Tim.* Fr. 87. For testimonies concerning Iamblichus' rejection of Plotinus' doctrine, including this passage, see Steel (1978: 38–45). For another straightforward expression of the idea that in Proclus the soul does descend entirely, see *El. theol.* § 211.
15. On Proclus' interpretation of Plato's philosophy as a theology that is in agreement with mystery rites, cf. Ch. 10 in this volume. On Proclus' interpretation of the myth of the winged charioteer in the light of the *Chaldaean Oracles*, see the instructive discussion by Brisson (2000a: 155–7).
16. On these leader-gods and their role in the elevation of the human soul, cf. Ch. 6 in this volume. For the different levels within Proclus' divine hierarchy, see the comprehensive scheme in Appendix I.
17. See T.6 at the end of section 11.3; cf. Procl., *in Alc.* 247.1–8.
18. Procl., *Theol. plat.* IV 9, 27.6–10; for the identification of 'those who hold the highest ranks in the celebration of the mysteries' with the theurgists, cf. the note in the Saffrey and Westerink edn (1968–97: iv ad loc.).
19. Procl., *Theol. plat.* IV 26, 76.21–77.8; for the identification of 'the most venerable of all mysteries' with theurgic rituals, see the note in the Saffrey and Westerink edn (1968–97: iv ad loc.).

20. Procl., *Theol. plat.* IV 26, 77.20–78.4.
21. For the hope of the theurgists, see Procl., *Theol. plat.* IV 9, 27.11–15. For the reference to Pl., *Phdr.* 250c2 (ἀπαθείς κακῶν), see Procl., *Theol. plat.* IV 26, 77.25–6.
22. The somewhat mysterious phrase ‘unspeakable beauties’ (ἄρρητα κάλλη) probably derives from the *Chaldaean Oracles*, see the note in the Saffrey and Westerink edn (1968–97: iv ad loc.).
23. Lewy (2011<sup>3</sup>: 204–7). On purificatory rituals that include symbolical suicide/murder in Proclus, see further Van den Berg (2003).
24. We should, obviously, not confuse these immaterial symbols with e.g. the material symbols that we encountered earlier on. The underlying principle, however, remains the same: *sumbola* allow us to connect with the gods from whom these *sumbola* originate.
25. Procl., in *Crat.* § 71, 32.29–30.
26. On this anagogic triad, see further Hoffmann (2000).
27. Procl., *Theol. plat.* I 25, 109.24–110.16.
28. Procl., *Theol. plat.* I 25, 113.4–10; on this passage see Sheppard (1982: 218–20).
29. On the ritual of theurgic elevation, see e.g. Lewy (2011<sup>3</sup>: 177–226, 491–3).
30. For the Neoplatonic scale of virtue, see now Saffrey and Segonds (2001: pp. lxix–c); cf. Ch. 13 in this volume. On Marinus’ *Life of Proclus*, see also Ch. 1.
31. L. Brisson discusses this text at some length in Ch. 10.
32. For the miracles performed by Proclus, see Mar., *V. Proc.* §§ 28–9.
33. On this question, see also Helmig and Vargas (2014).
34. On *noeric* activity and providence as the two characteristics of the divine, see further the instructive note in the Saffrey and Segonds edn (2001: 33 n. 1).
35. Mar., *V. Proc.* § 28.26–7; cf. the note in the Saffrey and Segonds edn (2001: 34 n. 2).
36. On Proclus’ hymns and their relation to theurgy, see further Van den Berg (2001).
37. Procl., *Hymni* VII.1–2: you who ‘sprung forth from the paternal source and from the top of your series’.
38. I wish to thank the respondents to my chapter, John F. Finamore and Anne Sheppard, as well as Luc Brisson, for their helpful suggestions and useful remarks.

## Providence and Evil

*Carlos Steel*

### 12.1. THE PROBLEM

The problem of evil and, more precisely, the question as to how there can be evil in a world governed by divine providence occupied Proclus throughout his career. There are long digressions on this question in his commentaries on Plato;<sup>1</sup> he devoted a commentary to Plotinus' celebrated treatise 'From Where Comes Evil?' (*Enn.* I 8 [51]) and composed three monographs discussing providence, fate, evil, and free will. Though dealing with related problems, each of these three works—usually called by the Latin term *Tria opuscula*, as they are only preserved in a medieval Latin translation—has its own character. The first treatise is, as its title indicates, a discussion of *Ten Problems Concerning Providence*. That there is providence in the world is taken for granted. But how it exercises its activity without losing its transcendence, how it knows contingent events in a determinate way, how its foreknowledge does not abolish human freedom, how it distributes good and evil according to merit, why it seems to allow evil to happen—all these questions demand further investigation. In the second treatise, *On Providence and Fate and That Which Is Up to Us*, Proclus attempts to refute the views of the engineer Theodorus, who defended a radical determinism: there is no place for human self-determination in a world functioning like a mechanical clock. The third treatise, *On the Existence of Evils*, is a systematic exposition of the Platonic doctrine of evil. This treatise would enjoy a great fortune through Dionysius the Areopagite's adaption in *De divinis nominibus*.<sup>2</sup> In this contribution, I will mainly focus on this classical treatise, though occasionally using material from other works and, in particular, from the treatise *Ten Problems Concerning Providence*.<sup>3</sup>

In the treatise *On the Existence of Evils* the problem is formulated as follows:

Either evil exists: how then will it not stand in the way of that which is providential towards the good? Or providence fills the universe: how can there be evil

among beings? Some thinkers indeed yield to one of these two lines of reasoning: either they admit that not everything comes from providence, if evil exists, or they claim that evil does not exist, if all beings come from providence and the good: for the last position too 'pleases the soul'.<sup>4</sup> But perhaps someone may find a perspective from which both points of view do not conflict.

(Procl., *De mal.* 58.2–7)<sup>5</sup>

The easiest way out of this dilemma would be to deny one of its horns, and this is, indeed, what often happens. The experience of evil is so overwhelming that people deny the existence of a providence governing the world and human affairs. They either deny the existence of gods altogether and explain everything by natural forces and chance, as the atheists do in the tenth book of Plato's *Laws*, or they deny that the gods are concerned with the world and care for it, for this would disturb the gods' tranquillity. The latter is the position of the Epicureans. The Stoics and Platonists maintain the opposite view. They are convinced of the providential order of the world and deal with the problem of evil from that perspective. In their defence of providence, however, they tend to minimize what we experience as evil: it is not evil at all when viewed from the perspective of the whole of the universe, in which things happen that we may find unpleasant but that contribute to the overall good or necessarily follow as side effects from factors contributing to it. The Stoic theodicy is a monumental attempt to explain away the reality of evil. Or, rather, the Stoics accepted only moral evil as evil, and this they certainly considered an awful reality. Their theodicy only concerns non-moral evil in the world, i.e. physical phenomena like earthquakes, floods, or diseases, as well as human evil that we suffer without being morally responsible for it, such as wars and various crimes. In their view, these forms of non-moral evil, which most people consider real evil, are not evil at all and therefore cannot provide an argument against providence.<sup>6</sup> The Platonists of late antiquity adopted many aspects of the Stoic view on providence, though their metaphysical presuppositions, such as their rejection of the Stoics' materialistic monism, compelled them to distinguish between the deterministic order of fate and the providential order directed to the Good. Fate is subordinated to and an instrument of providence, and the incorporeal soul can find its destination and ultimate happiness beyond the physical cosmos. Yet even Platonic philosophers tended to minimize the presence of evil in the world. According to Proclus, some philosophers claimed that all beings are good, insofar as they proceed from the Good, though a distinction must be made between beings according to their distinct modes of procession from the first principle. The ultimate beings, which come close to matter, may seem to be 'evil' in comparison with those beings that are proximate to the One because they have less perfection. They are not, however, evil as such, but only 'less good'. For these philosophers, 'evil' is equated with what is 'less good'.<sup>7</sup>

Whatever the position taken, there seems to be no way around either detracting from providence or minimizing evil. Proclus, however—no doubt

following a specific Neoplatonic tradition since Iamblichus—seeks to find a carefully balanced middle position, so that at the end of his treatise he can proudly say: ‘If we are right in stating this, all things will be from Providence and evil has its place among beings’ (*De mal.* 61.16–17).

## 12.2. THE DEFENCE OF PROVIDENCE

Proclus’ systematic defence of providence (mainly inspired by Plato’s *Laws* X) is found in *Platonic Theology* I 15–18 and in *Elements of Theology* §§ 120–2. In most arguments Proclus takes the fact of providence in the universe for granted and examines various problems that follow if it is accepted. The order of the world and the regularity of nature cannot be explained without accepting the existence of a divine demiurge who has made the world on the pattern of the ideal paradigms with a view to the good, as suggested in the *Timaeus* (29d6–30c2).<sup>8</sup> As Proclus states, the denial of providence would ‘overturn the whole creation and the order bestowed upon the cosmos’; it would undermine religion, ‘for what community can there be of the humans with the gods, if the gods’ knowledge of the events of this realm is done away with?’ This will lead to the abolition of all worship, all traditional cults of religion, all oaths invoking the gods, all the intuitive beliefs we have about the gods without being instructed.<sup>9</sup> A sound theology, such as Plato has, confirms and articulates these deep-seated beliefs about providence. The gods are essentially good; goodness is not an attribute that is added to their being. They are both good and one by their very being and wish for all things to share in their goodness. They have the *will* to act providentially, the absolute *power* to exercise it (‘omnipotence’) and the comprehensive *knowledge* of all things required for this providence.<sup>10</sup> They have foreknowledge of all things, not in the sense that they foresee in a temporal sense what may occur later, as humans do when exercising providence. The gods, however, eternally anticipate everything because they exist ‘before’ all thinking and being, as Proclus likes to define the term *pro-noein*.<sup>11</sup> They ‘foreknow’ everything insofar as they are principles of goodness and unity for all beings, including individual, particular things. Whatever exists owes its being to its unity. Thanks to their ‘unitary’ foreknowledge, the gods can know contingent events and individual things.<sup>12</sup> If the gods were divine intellects in the Aristotelian sense, they would only know things according to their species and genera but not in their individuality.

Proclus considers it one of the great merits of Platonic theology that it reconciles the providential care of the gods with their transcendence.<sup>13</sup> The Epicureans rejected providence because they thought it was incompatible with undisturbed beatitude, and the Peripatetics had, for similar reasons, limited divine providence to the celestial sphere. The Stoics, on the contrary, entirely

abandoned the transcendence of the gods, and turned divine providence into an immanent causation. The Platonists, however, retain both transcendence and providence:

Thus in exercising providence the gods assume no relation to those for whom they provide, since it is in virtue of being what they are that they make all things good, and what acts in virtue of its being acts without relation (for a relation is an addition to being and therefore beside its nature). Nor does their separateness annul their providence; for it would at the same time annul—a thing unlawful even to say—their being, whose distinctive character is goodness.

(*El. theol.* § 122, 108.13–19; tr. Dodds modified)

Following Iamblichus (and a tradition starting in Middle Platonism), Proclus makes a clear distinction between providence and fate.<sup>14</sup> Fate is the cause of connection and sequence of what occurs in the physical world, interconnecting things that are separated in time and place. Providence is the cause of good for all beings governed by it, including not only the corporeal but also incorporeal substances such as souls. Providence thus precedes fate, and fate is subordinate to it as an instrument to introduce order in the physical realm. All things that occur according to fate also happen according to providence insofar as they are oriented to the good. The converse, however, is not true: the superior classes (such as angels) and the rational souls are not subject to fate. Rational souls fall under its domination only if they submit to the necessities of the body and the external world.

### 12.3. THE REALITY OF EVIL IN A PROVIDENTIAL WORLD

The problem of evil arises when the universe is seen from the perspective of a providential order directing all things towards the good. Whoever takes the world as resulting from chance and necessity will not be surprised to find so much chaos and disorder in it. The real surprise is then that things, taken altogether, are not so bad that life on earth becomes impossible for human beings. The belief in providence, however, should not lead us to diminish or explain away the reality of evil. Proclus distances himself explicitly from such a view. It is not without reason that his treatise on evil is titled ‘On the *Existence* (*hupostasis*) of Evils’. In the introduction to the treatise, he immediately tackles the ontological question and criticizes the view that evil could be understood as a lesser good.<sup>15</sup> The relation of evil to good is not that of a decrease of perfection, whereby the lowest degree of goodness would be called evil (as the lowest degree of heating may be called cold), but is a relation of true contrariety. The experience of vices both in our soul and in society shows that



evil has its own perverse structure (evil habits) that set it in opposition to the good (virtues). Evil in the form of disease, injustice, crime, or war is an awful reality, not a pseudo-existence. There is nothing absolutely and intrinsically evil, however, let alone an evil principle or evil substance. Nothing can exist unless it somehow takes part in goodness, and being is the first manifestation of goodness. Blindness does not exist unless there are animals with a capacity for sight but are deprived of it. There are no diseases unless they exist in a living organism, there are no vices unless they exist as perversions of souls. Only particular and relative forms of evil exist, i.e., evils that are contrary to particular goods. There is no universal principle of evil, an absolute evil. That is why Proclus prefers to speak about evils in the plural since there is almost an infinity of possible deviations from the good.

If only particular evils exist, they can only be found in particular beings that sometimes fail to participate in the good. These intermittent participants have their being in time and are liable to change. Universal beings, on the contrary, participate always and perfectly in the higher orders and immutably preserve the goodness that flows from them (see *Theol. plat.* III 27, 94.15–21). This variety in the modes of participation does not affect divine causality itself. The gods communicate their good on account of their being and are eternally active in the same way, producing the lower orders ‘by overflowing’, without losing anything of their own being. Not all beings, however, are capable of participating in divine illumination in the same way. Because there are partial participants, which at some time and in some respects may be deprived of the good, defects and shortcomings are inevitable.<sup>16</sup> But the occurrence of evil is never due to a deficiency of the superior principles but to the weakness of the recipients, which are incapable of fully receiving the goodness that flows down towards them. One can pose the obvious objection: Why did the procession not stop at the level of the eternal participants, which are always good?<sup>17</sup> In this way, there would have been no place for evil in the universe. Proclus replies that the procession of beings could not stop at the level of eternal participants, for the latter would then constitute the ultimate class of beings and remain themselves infertile and unproductive. Moreover, as Plato argues in the *Timaeus* (41b), the universe would not be complete if it did not also include the inferior mortal beings. A perfect universe requires gradations of perfection, the lowest of which are partial beings that participate in time and are affected by change.<sup>18</sup> Because of the abundance of their power, the gods not only bring forth beings that eternally participate in them but also beings whose participation is only intermittent and cannot preserve unchanged the power that comes from their source:

The procession beginning from above ceases when it has got as far as those things which can both change and make to subsist along with themselves some sort of deviation (*παρυσιστάνειν τινὰ παρατροπήν*). (Procl., in *Alc.* 117.22–5)

Notwithstanding this gradation, whatever exists is good insofar as it exists, even if it has a lesser perfection in comparison to the superior order. There is, however, nothing evil in being a lesser perfection on the scale of procession. Evil only comes about when a being is deprived of the perfection that belongs to its own nature and position in the scale of being.

That which is weak is weak because of a defect (*ἀπόπρωσιν*) of its *own* power, not because of its abasement (*ὑφείσιν*) from what is superior. For otherwise, everything, except one, would be weak, and if weakness is evil, all things except one would be full of evil. However, abasement [in the scale of beings] is not evil for a thing, as it has its essence according to this abasement. If then weakness in the sense of abasement is what gives essence, whereas what is evil does not contribute to the essence of that of which it is evil—for what is essential is according to nature, whereas evil is contrary to nature—abasement will not be evil and what exists in this way will not be weak. However, when something does not have the power that belongs to it, then this lack of power is evil.

(Procl., in *Remp.* I 34.6–15)

There is no reason, then, to blame the divinity for having produced beings on the lowest scale that have the possibility of failure. Those beings are perfect and good on their own level. To be sure, the sublunary realm is inferior to the celestial spheres, but in its temporality it has its own perfection and beauty, though fragile and precarious. Moreover, how could one sufficiently praise human freedom, even if it contains the risk of abuse?

#### 12.4. WHERE DO EVILS ENTER INTO BEING?

Proclus devotes a large part of his treatise *On the Existence of Evils* to the question where evils ‘make their entry into being’. He investigates, one by one, the different levels of the ontological hierarchy, starting with the gods and moving down towards matter. Evil is not to be found in the gods, in the three ‘superior kinds’—angels, demons, and heroes—in the divine souls, or in universal bodies (the elements taken as wholes), and not even in matter.<sup>19</sup> The only beings susceptible to evil are particular souls (both human souls and irrational souls) and particular material bodies.

Human souls are capable of acting both in accordance with their rational nature and against their nature in ‘choosing what is worse’. The connection of the human soul with the body and the irrational soul may explain why it is tempted to choose what is evil, but that is no excuse for it. As Proclus shows, the ‘descent’ of rational souls into bodies was required for the good of the universe (the creation of mortal rational animals). Moreover, the rational soul could only take care of the body through the mediation of the irrational soul.

Without that intermediary 'buffer' soul, the rational soul would be impeded in its own rational activities. Hence, non-rational life, which, for the rational soul, is 'beside its nature' (*para phusin*), is connected to it so it can preserve its own activities in accordance with nature (*kata phusin*). But this opposition between the non-rational and the rational life in the human animal, which is not evil as such, makes it possible for the rational soul to be led astray and to live against its nature.<sup>20</sup> According to Proclus, not only human souls but the irrational souls in animals as well, such as lions or dogs, may become better or worse insofar as they live more or less according to their own nature.<sup>21</sup>

Corporeal beings are subject to evil, because they can be in a state contrary to their nature. Proclus distinguishes two forms of evil in bodies: deformity when the form does not prevail over its matter, as when a 'monster' is born, an animal with an abnormality, and diseases when the order of the body is dissolved. These deficiencies may only occur in particular corruptible bodies, not in the universal bodies (such as the elements), nor in the celestial bodies, which are everlasting and remain invariably the same and uniform in their activities.

Basically, there are two levels on which evils occur: that of particular (human and animal) souls and that of particular material bodies. The souls, which are everlasting, can only be affected in their powers and activities, particular bodies can be corrupted even in their substance. Proclus never attempts to connect the two occurrences of evil causally. The corporeal world with its inherent corruptibility and decay does not result from a fall of the souls or an original sin, as some Gnostic or Christian Platonists imagined.<sup>22</sup> And the souls are not affected by evil because of their contact with the body or with matter, as Plotinus sometimes seems to suggest. Nevertheless, on the descent of the soul to the body, Proclus shares the same ambivalence as Plotinus (in *Enn.* IV 8 [6]): the soul is 'sent' down on the command of the demiurge for the good of the universe, but there is also a 'weakness' in the soul, an incapacity to contemplate continuously, a 'desire to precipitate downwards', towards 'oblivion and ignorance'. One should not, however, understand this weakness as something constitutive of the human soul, for this would make the soul evil by nature. What is characteristic of its essence is the impossibility of always participating in the highest good, a capacity for ascending and descending. It remains up to the soul to choose the better life even in its connection to the body.<sup>23</sup>

## 12.5. CAUSES OF EVIL

If evil has some reality, there must be causes explaining how it comes to be.<sup>24</sup> Proclus finds three major types of explanation in the philosophical tradition.

First, some people maintain that there is a 'fount' from which all evils spring, just like there is a source of all good things. This is the position traditionally associated with Manichaeism, though Proclus never refers to this doctrine. Second, some philosophers (like Amelius, a disciple of Plotinus) posit an intelligible paradigm of evil. Just as there is a Form of the Just, so there must also be a Form of the Unjust, as Socrates seems to suggest in *Theaetetus* 176e. A third group of philosophers postulate a maleficent soul as the principle of evil, invoking *Laws* X (896e–897d).<sup>25</sup> Proclus argues that none of these principles can be the cause of evil. As we have already seen, there can be no supreme principle of evil, coequal with and opposing the good. The existence of two equal principles makes us postulate again a first principle prior to them, from which they both derive. Will this principle be good, evil, or neither? Moreover, a principle of evil would have to share in some goodness to be a principle and be productive. Nor can there be some intelligible Form of evil, for it is the characteristic of a paradigm to be perfect. To be sure, some souls imitate vice, passions, and the foulness they see, instead of assimilating themselves to the ideal paradigms of perfection. As Proclus argues, however, one could call these models of perversion 'paradigms' only in a metaphorical sense, as they fall short of the perfection of the Forms.<sup>26</sup> Equally unacceptable is the hypothesis of a maleficent soul as the ultimate principle of evils, for every soul is by nature good and cannot be perverted in its essence. Since Proclus had already ruled out the view that matter is the principle of evil, all possibilities seem to be exhausted: 'if these are not the causes of evils, what then will we ourselves claim to be the cause of their coming to be?' (47.1–2). The search for *one single* cause explaining all evil should, however, be given up. Instead, a plurality of causal factors should be considered:

By no means should we posit one cause that is a unique per se cause of evils. For if there is one cause of good things, there are many causes of evils, and not one single cause. (Procl., *De mal.* 47.2–4)

Proclus definitely rejects the reduction of plurality to unity in the case of evil. Unlike the many good things, whose goodness can be traced back to a supreme good, evils constitute an indeterminable multitude and therefore cannot be reduced to a single principle and cause. Good things are characterized by unity and concord: every good confirms and completes another good; no good opposes or excludes another. Therefore, all goods can all be ultimately reduced to one principle. Evil things, on the contrary, are dissimilar, in discord and opposition to one another. Therefore, one will look in vain if one tries to find a single cause that is the per se cause of all kinds of evil. As Plato himself observes in *Republic* II (379c6–7), 'we must look for some other factors—and not God—as the causes of evil' (ἅλλ' ἅττα δέι' ζητεῖν τὰ αἴτια). Commenting on this passage, Proclus explains that Plato is here using the plural *aitia* and that he has qualified it by adding the indeterminate pronoun *atta*.<sup>27</sup> We should

therefore give up all ambition to formulate a grand theory of evil, a systematic explanation of its multiform occurrences.

Nevertheless, even if we accept an irreducible plurality of causes to explain occurrences of evil, we are confronted with a fundamental problem since none of the modes of causality can be properly applied to the origins of evil.<sup>28</sup> First, evil is not the result of an *efficient* cause, for every cause produces by itself (per se) only what is good, that is, the intended effect that is desirable because it is appropriate to the agent. Therefore, the shortcomings in the effect are not due to the activity and the powers of the cause as such, but to its lack of power and weakness and deficiency. To call particular souls efficient causes of evil is therefore only partly justified. Properly speaking, the souls are not efficient causes when they engage in evil action, since they do not produce evil out of power, but out of weakness because they fail to reach what they really want. The same is true of all corporeal factors that harm and destroy other things.

It would be equally impossible to envisage a true *paradigmatic* cause of evil. To be sure, many souls are fascinated by the models of evil they see in society and literature and may attempt to imitate them, but, as we have seen, these models of perversion are not paradigms in the strict sense. For it is only of things according to nature that we accept that there are ideal Forms. One could argue that there is a *final* cause of evil, for even evil things and evil actions exist and act for the sake of some good, as all true Platonists accept. However, it is not insofar as those evil things intend what is good that they do wrong and harm, but insofar as they fall short of it. The Good may be the final cause of all things and of all actions, including those that are evil, but it is not the cause of evils qua evils: it is the cause only insofar as they somehow exist and act. If the good is indeed the cause of all that happens, it is never the final cause of evil per se, for it is not for the sake of the good that agents transgress, but because they fail to reach the good. Therefore, there is no final cause of evil per se. In fact, even if we admit that there are multiple causes of evil, they are not causes in the proper sense as the primordial factor (*prohêgoumenê*) from which a certain effect follows by necessity in accordance with the nature of the cause:

And perhaps it may be better not to make the efficient cause [of evil] a primordial [cause], nor its paradigm a [paradigm] according to nature, nor its final cause a cause per se. For the form of evils, their nature, is a kind of defect, indeterminateness and a privation, their *hupostasis*, is, as it is usually said, more like a kind of *par-hupostasis*. (Procl., *De mal.* 49.7–11)

The term *parhupostasis* is notoriously difficult to translate.<sup>29</sup> Literally, it means 'to exist beside or along something else', 'to have its existence together with something else, or consequent upon something else'. Thus, Sextus uses the verb in a Stoic context for the Stoic *lekton* (the incorporeal meaning that corresponds to a term) to denote that it 'exists together with and beside' our

thought; it is also said of place (*topos*) that 'it subsists beside' bodies without being itself a body or a property of a body.<sup>30</sup> The Stoics, it seems, had recourse to the broader term *huphisthanai* 'to capture the mode of beings of things that have no being (*einai*)' in the strict sense (i.e. are not bodies).<sup>31</sup> Sextus (*Pyr. hyp.* I 205.4) also uses the term to indicate that *ataraxia* is an unintended side effect of the sceptic *epochê*. It is doubtful, however, that the Stoics and Sceptics already used the term. In later Neoplatonism, the term becomes a technical term to indicate the problematic ontological status of evil.<sup>32</sup> Evil has no being of its own, no essence, is no substance, quality, property, or power but only exists upon and alongside some real existent that it weakens and perverts. In some contexts, one may render *parhupostasis* as 'parasitic existence'. The meaning of the term, when applied to evil, becomes clear in the context of a causal analysis of the origin of evil, or rather in the recognition that a proper causal analysis of evils qua evils—i.e. failures, mistakes, and shortcomings—is impossible. Proclus makes this connection with the problem of causality in the opening lines of the chapter on *parhupostasis*:

We must next consider what the mode of evil is and how it comes into existence from the above-mentioned causes and non-causes. Here we must bring in the so-called *parhupostasis*. (Procl., *De mal.* 50.1–3)

To exist in a proper sense (*kuriôs*), an effect must result from a cause that proceeds according to its nature towards a goal that is intended. In such a case, there is an essential or per se relation between the cause and its effect. Whenever an effect is produced that was not intended or is not related by nature or to the agent per se, it is said to exist as it were beside (*parhuphistanai*) the intended effect. Therefore, it is better to call the mode of existence of evil a *parhupostasis*, rather than a *hupostasis*.

For there is no other way of existing for that which is neither produced, in any way whatsoever, from a primordial cause, nor related to a determinate goal and something 'for the sake of', nor has received an entry into being in its own right (per se). In fact, whatever exists properly (*κυρίως*) must come from a cause in accordance with nature—indeed, without a cause it is impossible for anything to come about—and must relate the order of its coming to be to some goal.

(Procl., *De mal.* 50.3–9)

Just as an agent never intends a failure as failure, no cause ever brings forth evil as evil: it exists alongside an intended goal. Evils are not the outcome of goal-directed processes but happen *per accidens*, as incidental side effects that fall outside the intention of the agents. This does not exclude the possibility of intentionally committing an evil act, but even in that case the aim would be what appears good to the person committing the evil act. Therefore, it seems that we must classify evils, failures, and shortcomings of all kinds among accidental beings.

In which class of things should we then place evil? Perhaps it belongs to those that have their being accidentally and because of something else, and not from a principle of their own. (Procl., *De mal.* 50.9–11)

At the basis of Proclus' argument is Aristotle's distinction between causality *per se* and causality *per accidens* (*Met. E* 2–3). What is accidental is not necessary and cannot be explained as the determinate outcome of causal factors. Rather, it is indeterminate (*aoriston*). The causes of such an effect are unordered (*ataкта*) and indefinite (*apeira*; *Met. E* 2, 1065a24–6). Aristotle's examples of the man discovering a treasure when digging a grave, or meeting a debtor when going to the agora, are well known. These, however, are unintended positive side effects. Evils can be seen as negative side effects. They are accidental not because of the unexpected interference of other causes but because they do not come forth from their causes according to their nature. They have no primordial cause and are not intended *per se*. In fact, evil results as an unwelcome by-product from the fact that an agent does not attain (*ateuxia*) its appropriate goal.

Therefore one should call such a coming to be a *parhupostasis*, as it is unaccomplished (*ἀτελής*) and unintended (*ἄσκοπον*), somehow uncaused (*ἀναίτιόν πως*) and indeterminate (*ἀόριστον*). (Procl., *De mal.* 50.29–31)

It is remarkable that Proclus flirts with the idea that evils are somehow uncaused. The notion of an uncaused motion also figures in a text that is part of the *Mantissa* attributed to Alexander of Aphrodisias.<sup>33</sup> Referring to Aristotle's analysis of accidental causation,<sup>34</sup> the author argues that chance events do not come from a cause as it is but from a cause as it 'is not', i.e. a cause *per accidens*.

For when anything follows on a certain cause, the cause not existing for the sake of this thing's coming about, then what proceeds is called the cause *per accidens* of this thing that followed on it, that is, *not a cause*. What followed on this cause came about without a cause (*ἀναίτιος*), for it did not do so on account of a cause of its own. (Alex., *De an. mant.* 171.11–14; tr. Sharples)

This mixture of being the cause of an effect with not being its cause also explains, the author thinks, how contingent effects may follow or not follow from our deliberation. To regard an event as 'uncaused' does not imply that it is completely divorced from the preceding causes. There would be no discovery of a treasure without the preceding digging. But the event is uncaused because it cannot be explained as the outcome of a particular process. Here one may refer to Sorabji's (1980: 3–5) interpretation of Aristotle, *Metaphysics E* 3, where he argues that coincidences are uncaused if we understand 'cause' in terms of the ability to give an explanation. As coincidences, such fortuitous events are indeed uncaused.

It is still surprising that Proclus accepts some sort of 'uncaused events' in his explanation of the occurrence of evils since he fully endorses the axiom formulated by Plato at the beginning of the cosmology of the *Timaeus*: 'Everything that comes to be must of necessity come to be by a cause, for it is impossible for anything to come to be without a cause' (28a4–6).<sup>35</sup> Why then, in his account of evil, does Proclus seem to admit the existence of something uncaused? The reason is, of course, that he wants to avoid a reduction of evil to the divine first cause. In fact, any explanation of evil in causal terms would integrate evil into the metaphysical structure of the universe and would inevitably lead us to the first cause as the ultimate explanation of evil. The only way to exculpate the divinity is to understand evil as an event that does not have a proper or principal existence (*prohêgoumenê hupothesis*) but comes about—qua evil, not qua effect—without a principal antecedent cause. A cause that brings about an effect through weakness, however, and not through power—i.e. by not attaining the intended goal—is not a true cause of that effect. Therefore, in a way, evils remain uncaused. The gods, then, cause all beings but are not the cause of evil (*theos anaitios*).

## 12.6. PRIVATION

The Neoplatonic theory of evil is often presented as the privation theory of evil.<sup>36</sup> This statement is not necessarily wrong. Evil, as we have seen, must be explained as a lack, a deficiency, shortcoming, or privation, rather than as a positive nature, essence, property, or power. This does not mean that privation as such is evil. Proclus devotes an entire chapter of his treatise to rejecting the identification of evil with privation. Evil is not a privation of substantial form or being but of a perfection, of a good that a being is supposed to have. To understand this distinction one has to go back to the celebrated analysis of change in Aristotle's *Physics* I 7.

According to Aristotle, the explanation of change requires three factors: the substrate, the form a thing has actually acquired, and the privation of the form it does not yet have but may later have through change. In this sense, privation is the opposite of the acquisition of a form and is nothing of its own nature. It thus differs from the substrate that 'desires' the form and persists through change from one form to another. In his explanation of evil, Plotinus identified matter and privation. In his view, matter never truly 'receives' the forms to constitute a composite being, it always remains a recipient unaffected by them. It is therefore the absolute privation of all positive qualifications and as such the first principle of evil.<sup>37</sup> Proclus rejects this equation of matter and privation and insists that matter plays an important role in the formation of the sensible cosmos (see Opsomer 2001b). Being necessary, it can never be



considered evil, and even less so absolute evil, which does not even exist. Matter is therefore not contrary to the good of the Forms and a fortiori not to the supreme Good. Moreover, privation of a form is not evil as such; it is merely the absence of a form. The fact that some specific body has not yet come to be, because the material substrate has been deprived of its form, is not an evil. As Proclus says:

That which is not yet generated is a privation, but not evil. Fire, for instance, and water and other [elements] are as such [i.e. fire or water] deprived of that which does not yet exist [i.e. air or fire], but none of these are as yet evil.

(Procl., *De mal.* 38.17–19)

In the sublunary world, things are continuously generated and destroyed. Their non-existence at this moment is not, however, an evil to them. Similarly, complete privation of the form will lead to the destruction and non-existence of a particular being. This non-existence is again not an evil for this being, as it can no longer be subject to any deprivation. Surprisingly, Proclus could agree with Epicurus' argument against the fear of death: there is nothing dreadful in not existing for something that does not exist and thus cannot suffer evil. Whereas the privation of a form is a mere absence of the corresponding positive state (*hexis*), the privation of the good is not possible when the good is *completely* absent. Let us take the example of a disease in a living organism: this is not a total privation of health. If it were, the animal itself would be destroyed and with it the disease. Or let us take an immoral person: even in his most passionate behaviour, he will not entirely lose the capacity of reason. Only in a rational person is the irrational perversion of evil possible.

No form of life is so bad that the power of reason is completely extinguished. For reason remains inside, expressing itself feebly, but it does so though surrounded by all kinds of passions, and understanding never leaves the upper part of the soul. (Procl., *De mal.* 7.42–6)

What is more, some form of the good (such as health or reason) not only remains present together with its privation (disease, irrationality) but also gives it power. Evil is thus never a pure privation or absence but derives being and power from the nature it is the privation of because it is interwoven with it. Evil can thus 'establish itself as something contrary to the good' and, by mixing with the good, even fight the good from which it derives its power (7.30–1). This would not be possible if evil were a pure privation. Privations of forms, on the contrary, are always total privations: nothing of the positive state (*hexis*) remains and, by consequence, there is nothing left to oppose the form of which it is the privation. It is different with privations of perfections. A disease is more than the absence of order and functioning. It has the power to attack and undermine a given order in the body. This kind of privation not only diminishes and weakens the corresponding good but also

does it with a force deriving from the good. Because it always parasitizes upon a good disposition, it can usurp the power of this disposition and use it against it. This is what gives evil its awful reality. In its strong opposition to the good, evil seems to be a contrary force. It should, however, not be called a contrary, but a subcontrary (*hupenantion*) of the good, as Plato calls it in the *Theaetetus* 176a (see *De mal.* § 54). The notion of 'subcontrary' allows Proclus to accept some contrariety between particular evils and the corresponding forms of good, without attributing any being of their own to these evils. Evil can never exist on its own as a contrary of the good that truly exists on its own. It has a kind of existence only insofar as it parasitizes on the good.

### 12.7. PROVIDENCE AND EVIL

If evil is uncaused, it cannot be reduced to the first causality, that of the One-Good and of the gods, either directly or indirectly. Nevertheless, this very solution confronts us with a new problem, namely, that there seems to be a realm in the universe that lies outside providence, the realm of accidental uncaused events. This is, of course, not acceptable given the fact that providence, as Proclus teaches, encompasses everything, even contingent and chance events. Somehow, then, providence must also be the cause of evil. As we have seen, however, evils only exist insofar as they are mixed with beings that are good. Hence, they are produced by the gods only insofar as they are mixed with good things and somehow share in their perfections as parasites. Insofar as they are evils, they remain uncaused. If it were possible for pure and unmixed evils to exist, then this would be a problem for providence. But given that they turn out to be invariably mixed with some good, our trust in providence need not be endangered, for providence only produces what is good in them (see *De mal.* 58.7–16).

Nonetheless, to explain how evils can originate without involving divine causality is not sufficient to safeguard providence. After all, even if the gods are not directly responsible, once the evil effects are there (passions and vices of all kinds, criminal acts, injustice in politics, war, disease and disability), they seem to undermine the providential order of the world. How can we believe that the gods still direct everything towards the good if we see all this happen? The belief in providence requires that the gods somehow draw from evil things they have no responsibility for, something expedient, valuable for human beings and for the world as a whole. Therefore, a perspective must be found whereby evil is incorporated into the providential order. Since all evils are somehow dependent upon what is good, they can be integrated into the works of providence for the sake of the good. Proclus shows how this happens on the

two levels evil may occur on: in particular souls and in the realm of the corruptible bodies.

As we have said, two kinds of evil inhere in bodies: deformity and disease. Deformity is a state contrary to nature, though not a disease, as when monsters are born from normal animals. Although this is against nature in particular cases, it nevertheless happens in accordance with nature's universal laws. For even in a deformed animal, natural forms and reasons are present, though in unusual mixtures. Corruption and destruction stemming from disease are in accordance with nature in a twofold manner. From the perspective of universal nature, the corruption of one being is necessary for the generation of another. But, for the particular being, disease seems to be against its nature because it destroys the existence that it has in accordance with its form. Corruption of bodies is according to nature for the corrupting agent but contrary to nature for the body that undergoes it. Even for this particular being, however, corruption is a natural process, if this being is not considered a separate whole but a part contributing to the whole universe. The cycle of generation and corruption thus fits wonderfully into the providential programme for the good of the universe.

More challenging for our belief in providence are the evils produced by wicked souls and the evils suffered by innocents.<sup>38</sup> The evils of the soul are twofold: some are internal to the soul, such as wrong choices that affect the soul alone; others are exterior, such as actions in which the soul expresses its anger and desire. All those evils may have good effects. Through the performance of evil actions, people make the evil that is concealed in their soul visible, which may contribute to their healing, as is shown in the case of remorse. Just as doctors open ulcers and so make evident the inward cause of the disease, so providence hands souls over to shameful actions and passions so they can be freed from their pain and start a better life. Even internal passions can have a providential effect. For if the soul chooses what is bad, it will be dragged down towards baseness and thus get what it deserves. Proclus is convinced that providence will ultimately punish all evil conceived or done by souls. How providence sets things right that went wrong due to particular agents, how it distributes rewards and punishments in accordance with the merits of the agents, is examined in questions 6–9 of *On Providence*. Proclus first addresses the question of the apparent inequality in the distribution of good and evil, which undermines our fundamental intuitions about providence: 'Why do good people fare badly whereas bad people achieve what they desire?'<sup>39</sup> Proclus answers that the external goods do not really contribute to well-being whereas virtue is its own reward and does not need external compliments. Providence gives the virtuous what they desire most, that is, whatever increases their virtue, and gives the evil-minded what they want, namely, apparent goods, which will in fact become the instruments of their own punishment, for the accumulation of external goods leads to ever more desires

that cannot be satisfied, stimulate base passions, hate, and conflict. The virtuous profit from the adverse circumstances in which they temporarily find themselves. In the eighth and the ninth questions Proclus examines why providence seems to postpone its punishment of the wicked and reward for the virtuous and examines why people are punished for evil done by their forefathers or why a city as a whole is punished for what some politicians did in the name of the city. (This leads to an interesting examination of the notion of inherited and collective guilt.<sup>40</sup>) Here Proclus is much indebted to Plutarch of Chaeroneia and the Platonic-Stoic tradition.

To conclude, according to Proclus it is possible to reconcile belief in providence with the experience of evil in the world. Providence is the cause of whatever exists insofar as it is good, but it is not the cause of what may go wrong in the sublunary realm. Evils occur because of the weaknesses of the inferior causes (bodies, souls) and can exist only insofar as they are connected with good things upon which they parasitize. Although providence is not itself responsible for the occurrence of evils, it encompasses all forms of evil for the sake of the good.

## NOTES

1. See Opsomer and Steel (2003: 3–4, 105 n. 6).
2. On Dionysius' indebtedness to Proclus, see Steel (1997b) and Kavvadas (2009). Cf. also Ch. 15 in this volume.
3. For an introduction to Proclus' doctrine on evil, see Phillips (2007), Kavvadas (2009), Chlup (2009), O'Rourke (2015). Most of the arguments in this chapter have been extensively discussed by myself and Jan Opsomer in our introductions to and annotations on the translations of the *Tria opuscula*: see Opsomer and Steel (2003), Steel (2007), and Opsomer and Steel (2012). I thank my friend and colleague Jan Opsomer for allowing me to use some of our common material in my contribution. The translations are taken from the Ancient Commentators on Aristotle series. I modified some passages of the translation of *On the Existence of Evils* (*De mal.*), however, taking Strobel (2014) into account. I thank Fran O'Rourke for comments on my text.
4. '*Etenim et hoc inquinat (σαίνει) animam.*' The expression is used by Arist., *Met.* N 3, 1090a36–7 (see Strobel 2014: 918–19). See also Anon. *Proleg.* 7.17–18.
5. See also the fifth question in *De dec. dub.*: 'If there is providence, why does evil have a place among beings at all? This problem persuaded many (1) either to accept evil because of its evidence and dispute the existence of an all-pervasive providence (2) or to admit that providence orders all things and get rid of evil by saying that all things are only good (though some people want to call "evil" the good things that are the most remote from the primary). For there is not some evil that is not a lesser good.'
6. For a recent account of the Stoic doctrine of evil, see Algra (2014).

7. See *De mal.* 4.32–4 and 6.19–25. Proclus may be referring to Plotinus. See *Enn.* II 9 [33] 13.27–9: ‘consider evil as nothing else than a falling short . . . and a lesser good’ (but see also *Enn.* I 8 [51] 5.6–8).
8. On Proclus’ interpretation of this text as an expression of a doctrine of providence, see Lernould (2014).
9. See *in Parm.* V 953.27–954.6. As Proclus informs us, commentators took lemma 134b as an occasion to discuss the question of providence and Proclus does the same in an interesting digression (*in Parm.* V 953.2–960.26).
10. On the triad of will, power, and science in providence see Lernould (2014), Saffrey and Westerink (1968–97: i. 71 n. 1), and Dodds’ commentary on *El. theol.* § 121 (1963: 264).
11. See *El. theol.* § 120, 106.7: ‘Providence, as its name shows, is an activity prior to intelligence’ (tr. Dodds).
12. This is the second problem in *De dec. dub.* See Opsomer and Steel (2012: 9–16).
13. Dodds (1963: 265): ‘Proclus regards the reconciliation of providence with transcendence as the special glory of Platonism.’ See *El. theol.* § 122; *Plat. theol.* I 15, 76.10–77.4 and *in Parm.* V 954.19–956.2. See Steel (1996a).
14. On this distinction, see *On Providence* §§ 3–14 and the commentary in Steel (2007).
15. See n. 7 in this chapter.
16. Proclus examines at length the problem of participation in the fourth question of *De dec. dub.* See the introduction in Opsomer and Steel (2012: 24–7); see also *De mal.* § 7.
17. On Proclus’ doctrine of procession, see Ch. 3 in this volume.
18. See *De dec. dub.* V 28.4–11 and *De mal.* 5.10–16; cf. already Plotinus, *Enn.* III 2 [47] 2.8–10.
19. For the different levels in Proclus’ ontological system, see Appendix I in this volume.
20. See *De dec. dub.* V 31. The expression *παρὰ φύσιν* is difficult to translate. Literally, it means what is not according to its nature but over and above it, in excess of it; hence, the sense of transgression (see the excellent article on *παρά* + acc. in Liddell–Scott). The standard translation ‘against or contrary to nature’ is too strong because it suggests an opposition to nature, whereas it is ‘beside nature’ (*praeter naturam*).
21. On the question whether animal souls can become better or worse according to their type of life, see *De mal.* §§ 25–6. See also *De dec. dub.* VII, where Proclus examines providence in the animal reign. Animals are also somehow responsible for the evil or good they do and should be punished and rewarded accordingly by divine providence. This question is unparalleled in ancient philosophy.
22. Here one can think of Origen or Augustine, for whom all evil is either a sin or a consequence of sin.
23. On the weakness of the soul as cause of its descent, see *De mal.* § 24, and Phillips (2007: 238–42).
24. In this section we follow *De mal.*, §§ 40–9 (‘We should look at the causes for evil and ask ourselves whether there is one and the same cause for all evils or not. For some say there is, but others deny this’: *De mal.* 40.2–3). See Opsomer and Steel (1999).

25. Proclus is probably thinking of Plutarch of Chaeronea and Atticus.
26. On Proclus' refutation of Forms of evil, see d'Hoine (2011c).
27. See *De mal.* 47.11–17; cf. *in Tim.* I 375.20–376.1; *in Remp.* I 38.3–9; *in Parm.* III 830.14.
28. On the following argument, see *De mal.* §§ 48–9.
29. On this term, see Lloyd (1987); Opsomer and Steel (2003: 24–8).
30. See SVF 2.166 (= Sextus Emp., *Adv. math.* VIII 11) and SVF 2.507 (quotation from Iamblichus by Simplicius).
31. See Long and Sedley (1987: i. 164).
32. The first to have used the term for evil seems to be Iamblichus: see Simpl., *in Cat.* 418.4–6.
33. For a more extensive treatment of this text, see Opsomer and Steel (1999: 251–5).
34. See *Met. E* 2, 1026b21 and Sharples (1975: 37–63).
35. See *in Tim.* I 262.1–29 and *in Parm.* III 835.6–838.3. On the problem of 'evil without a cause', see Steel (1994a) and Opsomer and Steel (1999).
36. On evil as privation, see Phillips (2007) and Steel (2008).
37. For a qualified assessment of Plotinus' doctrine on matter/evil, see O'Brien (1993, 1999), O'Meara (1997).
38. The argument here summarises *De mal.* § 59.
39. This is the formulation of the problem in *De prov.* § 53.
40. On this question, see Van den Berg (2014a).

## The Human Life

*Dirk Baltzly*

Proclus' philosophy—like much of Neoplatonism—is widely thought to be focused almost exclusively on metaphysics. His best-known works seem to be principally concerned with mapping the metaphysical (i.e. theological) geography of the orders of gods. The right moral to draw, however, is not that Proclus was not interested in ethics or made no contribution to the field. It is rather that we, from our modern standpoint, don't see the ethical purpose of metaphysics.

Proclus' writings are an extended meditation on what he regarded as the great Platonic tradition. The point was not merely to *understand what these Platonists thought* or even to *learn the truth* about the subjects that they discuss—though one will do that too, of course. It was rather to have one's efforts at self-transformation guided by the divinely inspired teachings of those in the Platonic tradition. Success in this exercise of self-transformation makes a person good. But in Platonism to become good is to *become like god*. This is why so much of Proclus' writings is directed at understanding the various orders of gods—from the One, through the henads, to the encosmic gods, and ultimately to the daemons that mediate between humans and gods.<sup>1</sup> Since the understanding mind becomes like the object that it understands, and since the correct goal for a human life is to become good, and thus to become like the divine to the greatest extent possible, the overwhelmingly theological focus of Proclus' work makes enormous ethical sense. Proclus does not concentrate on metaphysics to the exclusion of ethics. Metaphysics *is* an essential component of ethics. Ethics consists not merely in theorizing about the good but in becoming good, and this is a self-transformation in which knowledge of the gods plays an utterly central role.

Proclus' philosophical writings emerge from an even wider project than that of *self-transformation*. His Plato commentaries in particular formed part of an institutional exercise in the psychic transformation of students within the school at Athens. Proclus' commentaries follow the order of dialogues in the

Iamblichean curriculum. From the anonymous *Prolegomena to Platonic Philosophy* we can see that this order of dialogues was chosen precisely because it was supposed to contribute to a sequential progress through different gradations of the cardinal virtues. In my view, Proclus' entire philosophical corpus is best understood within the context of what Brian Stock (1983) has called a 'textual community'. Members of a textual community seek salvation through meditation upon what they regard as authoritative texts, the understanding of which unites them to god.

In section 13.1 we will look at the goal or telos according to Proclus and the other Neoplatonists: assimilation to the divine. In section 13.2 we will consider Proclus' account of the various gradations of the virtues through which one is assimilated to the divine. In section 13.3 we will look at how reading Plato makes one virtuous: the Iamblichean curriculum and the manner in which it was supposed to structure the acquisition of the different grades of the virtues. In section 13.4 we will consider Proclus' political philosophy. This investigation will, in the standard Neoplatonic manner, involve reversion to our starting point, for we will see that an abstruse metaphysical question, like the eternity of the cosmos, has a concrete political point.

### 13.1. THE TELOS: BECOMING LIKE GOD

While Aristotle's *Nicomachean Ethics* sets out the canonical form for ancient moral philosophy, Proclus' treatment of the telos involves a dramatic generalizing of the answer to moral philosophy's central question. Let us pursue the contrast with Aristotle's ethics to set Proclus' views in context.

All Graeco-Roman moral philosophy subsequent to Aristotle starts from an identification of the telos or goal of living. This is a specification of what well-being or *eudaimonia* consists in, for *eudaimonia* is the goal of all that we do. Aristotle had exploited the semantic connections that exist in ancient Greek between what is done 'in accordance with virtue' (*kat'aretên*) and what is done 'successfully' or done 'well' (*eu* or *kalôs*) to argue that human happiness is the soul's activity in accordance with the virtues of practical and theoretical reason. The virtues of *practical* reasoning were, according to Aristotle, stable dispositions to act for the right reasons and to have emotional responses of the right sort. Correct patterns of choosing or feeling were those that fell between two opposed patterns of getting such matters wrong—the so-called doctrine of the mean. These *ethical* virtues of practical reason arose in the soul when proper habituation was perfected with philosophical understanding. The virtues of our capacity for theoretical reasoning, or the *theoretical* virtues, were presented as a less-unified laundry list of intellectual excellences. These



include knowledge or *epistêmê*, which is the capacity to produce demonstrations from first principles (*Eth. Nic.* VI 3, 1139b31–2); the capacity for apprehending the first principles of demonstration (*nous*); and wisdom or *sophia* which consists in having both *epistêmê* and *nous* (VI 7, 1141a19).

For all that has been said so far, there is no obvious connection between the ethical and the theoretical virtues. One of the most important of the theoretical virtues, however, serves to draw these two sides of Aristotle's moral thought together. This is practical wisdom or *phronêsis* and Aristotle insists that no one can have this virtue without having the ethical virtues, nor is it possible to have the full measure of the ethical virtues without possessing *phronêsis*. Nonetheless, there is apparently not a perfect symmetry in Aristotle's *Ethics* between the contribution that the ethical and intellectual virtues make to happiness. In chapter 7 of book X, Aristotle returns to his initial outline of what *eudaimonia* or happiness consists in. If happiness is the life of excellent (i.e. virtuous) activity, then it is reasonable that it should be the activity that is performed in accordance with the *highest* excellence in us—the excellent activity of that which is best in us. This, he asserts (without argument!), is intellect or *nous*, which is either divine or at least the most divine thing in us. Its activity is contemplation or *theôria*.

Nearly all these points, which are made with Aristotle's characteristic clarity and explicitness, have antecedents in the Platonic dialogues. These parallels, plus the precedent of the Hellenistic schools of philosophy, made it quite natural that the re-emergence of dogmatic Platonism in the first century BC should see the provision of a Platonic moral philosophy articulated in terms of the structure of moral philosophy set out in Aristotle's *Ethics*. The exact specification of the goal of living or *telos* for Platonists might come as a surprise to modern readers of Plato. If we were to think about how one might present Platonic moral philosophy in the mould of the *Nicomachean Ethics*, we would be inclined to look to the *Republic*—since, for the modern age, this is the principal source of Plato's moral philosophy—and identify the *telos* with psychic harmony. The Middle Platonists and Neopythagoreans who relaunched Platonism as a dogmatic school of philosophy, however, looked to the *Theaetetus* and the *Timaeus* for the identity of the Platonic *telos*. There they found the doctrine that the goal of living is assimilation to the divine. The crucial passage comes in the digression on the value of philosophy in the *Theaetetus*:

it is not possible, Theodorus, that evil things should be destroyed—for there must always be something opposed to the good; nor is it possible that evils should be found among the gods, but of necessity evils circulate among mortal nature and this place down here. It is for this reason that one ought to make haste to flee. But flight means *becoming like God as far as possible*, and likeness to God is to come to be just and holy in company with wisdom.

(*Tht.* 176a5–b3; cf. *Tim.* 90b1–d7)

The Middle Platonists and Neopythagoreans were thus not inventing a telos for Platonism out of whole cloth. It has a clear foundation in the Platonic texts—though it is not an aspect of Platonic thought that has found much favour with modern interpreters.<sup>2</sup>

When we turn to Neoplatonism, the centrality of the *Theaetetus* text for Platonic ethical reflection was accepted by Plotinus, who mentions it both in connection with happiness in *Enn.* I 4 [46] 16.10ff. and at the beginning of his discussion of the virtues in I 2 [19] 1. However, Plotinus' adumbration of the Platonic theme that the good life consists in assimilation to the divine is extremely paradoxical. In order for a subject to have a good life, it must be fully *alive*. Now, on Plotinus' view the Forms or Intelligibles are alive in the primary manner of being (*Enn.* I 4 [46] 3.33–40; cf. Plato, *Soph.* 248e6–249a10). Other things are alive only as dim images of this pure noetic life. So if a subject must be fully alive in order to have a life that is fully good, then he must live the life of intellect. If this cannot be done, then we must attribute *eudaimonia* to the gods alone. But Plotinus thinks it is obvious that we can be happy too. The solution is that each of us is *identical to* intellect or *nous* in actuality—and not merely potentially (*Enn.* I 4 [46] 4.12–17). Everything apart from this is *not me*, but merely something I wear. If I do things, like living among my fellow human beings or feeding myself, I perform these necessities not for myself, but for the sake of the living body joined to me.

In short, in Plotinus' version of the Platonic aspiration, the happy subject does not become *like* the divine intellect. Rather, he *is* divine. This will be Plotinus' infamous 'unfallen soul' that does not descend from the intelligible realm into the body. Paradoxically, happiness is not something that human beings enjoy qua humans. Instead, we transcend our humanity when we identify with the divine element that has been present in us all along.

Proclus certainly accepted the proposition that human *eudaimonia* consists in assimilation to the divine.<sup>3</sup> Like most subsequent Neoplatonists, however, he rejected Plotinus' notion of the unfallen soul (*El. theol.* § 211). The soul descends into the body in its entirety. While it has *logoi* of the intelligibles within it, it is not currently a part of, or engaged in, the divine life of intellect.<sup>4</sup> Its relation to these intelligible gods or Forms is mediated by divinities that are subordinate to the intelligibles. As a result, our assimilation to god will (at least initially) require us to become like divinities that are significantly more causally proximate to the visible universe into which our souls have descended. Proclus gives a special role to the 'leading gods' that he thinks are discussed in Plato's *Phaedrus*.

In *Phaedrus* 252c ff., Socrates tells Phaedrus how different souls, prior to embodiment, followed different gods in their tour of the super-celestial place of the Forms. In Plato's dialogue, Socrates uses this to explain the different manners in which different souls react to the experience of *love* and the different kinds of lovers they seek. Thus, for instance, those who followed

Ares will be jealous, potentially violent lovers. Proclus and his fellow Neoplatonists, however, generalized beyond the immediate context—whom we love and how—to the general lifestyle for different individuals. Different gods play different roles in the administration of the universe (*El. theol.* § 125; in *Tim.* I 36.7–14). So, since different souls have been followers of different gods in the *Phaedrus* myth, we should choose individual vocations that match the role that our ‘leading god’ plays in the gods’ providential care for the world. So if I have been a follower of Helios, then I will be most closely assimilated to my leading god if I pursue medicine (in *Tim.* III 279.14–19). For a soul of my sort, this is what happiness consists in. This claim is explicit in the notes taken by Hermias on Syrianus’ lectures on the *Phaedrus* 252d:

For this very thing is *eudaimonia* for a soul—to be able to imitate the appropriate god so far as each one can.

(in *Phdr.* 190.9–10 Couvreur = 198.30–1 Lucarini–Moreschini)

Proclus himself carries the notion of well-being or *eudaimonia* and leading gods ‘further down’ the series of divinities from the gods of the *Phaedrus*, who are described as liberated leading gods, to the messengers through which gods interact with humans—the *daimones*. In his commentary on *Timaeus* 42b3–5, Proclus writes:

The *eudaimôn* life [literally, ‘the well-daimoned life’] is one determined in accordance with the distinctive feature of the leaders, for the leaders who detain human souls [here in the sensible] or conduct them toward the intelligible realm belong in the order of *daimones*, just as the leaders among the liberated [gods] also [lead] them [up to the intelligible]. (in *Tim.* III 290.30–292.2)

There is no real tension here with Syrianus’ view, since Proclus is at pains to explain that, in one sense of the word ‘*daimôn*’ (δαίμων), anything that plays the role of exercising providential care for that which is proximately dependent upon it counts as a *daimôn*. Thus, presumably, the spiritual beings we normally call *daimones* have some more liberated divine souls that exercise providence over them so that they count as ‘well-daimoned’ or happy because of their leaders.

Proclus also regularly stresses the divinity of the sensible cosmos considered as a whole. The universe is a god that we, as embodied souls, should come to resemble. In what respects should we seek to resemble it? First, we should see that our psychic vehicles<sup>5</sup> share a shape with the cosmic body: both are spherical. The cosmos, however, is perfectly spherical and smooth. The souls of individual human beings acquire ‘accretions’ in their descent into Becoming (in *Tim.* III 297.16–24). Our assimilation to the universe requires that our vehicles should become ‘pure and naked’ (*El. theol.* § 209).

The universe also thinks, and even has a certain kind of sense-perception that closely resembles thinking.<sup>6</sup> The cosmos’ activity of thought arises from the perfectly circular psychic motions of the circles of the Same and the

Different within the World Soul whose nature Plato describes in the *Timaeus*. This is a *divine* paradigm for our own psychic activity: ‘Revolving within itself, it initiated a divine beginning of unceasing and intelligent life for all time’ (*Tim.* 36e4–5). In order to resemble the cosmos and the heavenly visible gods that inhabit it (i.e. the stars and planets), not only must our psychic vehicles be smooth and rounded, like the world’s body, but the psychic motions of the circles of the Same and the Different in us must also resemble the motions of the World Soul. To become assimilated to the divine and also purified of these accretions we require the virtues.

### 13.2. GRADES OF VIRTUES AND ASSIMILATION TO THE DIVINE

In the key passage from the *Theaetetus*, Socrates says that the goal of becoming like god is achieved through ‘coming to be just and holy in company with wisdom’. Justice and holiness are, of course, among the five cardinal virtues in classical Greek thought. To work out the implications of their conception of the telos, the Neoplatonists had to come to terms with a puzzle. The notion of likeness or similarity (*homoiôsis*) seems to imply that the two things that are alike should share one or more properties. But if we become like god by becoming *just*, then this suggests that god is just. But surely the gods don’t do what just *people* do—returning deposits or fairly dividing the profits of business deals. Aristotle makes this very point (*Eth. Nic.* X 8, 1178b7–22). Furthermore, when we consider what Plato says about the divine lifestyle, it looks overwhelmingly intellectual. In a passage from the *Laws* much cited by Proclus, Plato claims that the circular motion of the heavenly bodies is a visible analogue of the invisible activity of divine Intellect (*Leg.* X 898a). Aristotle, of course, claims that divine activity is self-intellection and that the human activity of philosophical contemplation or *theôria* most closely resembles this. If divine activity is so abstract and intellectual, how can it be that virtues like justice or self-control or courage make us resemble god?<sup>7</sup>

Proclus is the inheritor of a long-standing Platonic programme addressing this question. From Plotinus onward we find the idea that there are *gradations* of the cardinal moral virtues. This programme culminates in seven grades of the virtues distinguished by Iamblichus and Proclus. This seven-level scheme of virtues is described in the notes reporting the content of Damascius’ lectures on Plato’s *Phaedo* (I 138–51).<sup>8</sup>

- (i) Natural virtues—the result of good bodily conditions. They are reflexes of reason when reason is not impeded by some disorder. Natural virtues can come into conflict; e.g. natural wisdom might be at odds with natural courage. Cf. *Statesman* 306a; *Laws* VII 807c; XII 963e.

- (ii) Ethical virtues—acquired by habituation and right belief. They belong to both reason and the irrational soul simultaneously. Since ethical virtues are not reflexes that depend upon bodily conditions, they do not clash with one another. Cf. *Laws* II 653a.
- (iii) Political or civic virtues—these are virtues of reason, but virtues that reason exhibits in its relation to the irrational part of the soul. The rational soul possesses civic virtues when it puts these irrational parts into order and uses them as its instrument. The virtues are said to be discussed in the *Republic*, presumably IV 434d ff.
- (iv) Purificatory or kathartic virtues—like the civic virtues, these belong to reason, but reason insofar as it withdraws from relations to other things. It discards the body as its instrument and restrains activities that depend on this instrument. Cf. *Phd.* 69bc.
- (v) Theoretic virtues—these exist in the soul when the soul has forgotten itself and turned to what is above it, i.e. intellect. They are a kind of mirror image of the civic virtues, since they indicate the soul's activity in relation to something other than itself, but in this case that other thing is higher (intellect), not lower (the irrational soul). These virtues are said to be discussed in the *Theaetetus*, presumably 173c–176c.
- (vi) Paradigmatic virtues—exhibited by soul when it is no longer *contemplating* intellect, but when the soul is established by participation in the intellect which is the paradigm of all things.
- (vii) Hieratic virtues—exist in the godlike aspect of the soul. 'When they are extended alongside the aforementioned grades of virtue, each one of them is rendered substantial, since the hieratic virtues are surely pre-existent unities.'<sup>9</sup>

The virtues that are really of interest to the philosopher exhibit the kind of relational individuation that is common in Proclus.<sup>10</sup> Damascius' presentation (in *Phd.* I 144.3–4) probably represents a systematization on the part of Proclus of Iamblichus' basic idea.

- (iii) Political = rational soul standing in a relation (*schesis*) to irrational parts in a *kata logon* manner.
- (iv) Kathartic = rational soul unrelated (*aschetos*) to anything and remaining in itself.
- (v) Theoretic = rational soul related to intellect in a contemplative (*kata noun*) manner, i.e. as contemplating something distinct from itself.
- (vi) Paradigmatic = rational soul related to intellect in a participatory (*kata methexin*) manner, i.e. as *being* (albeit in the manner of participation) the very thing it contemplates.

- (vii) Hieratic = godlike part of the soul containing the rational part's virtues in an anticipatory-causal or *kat'aitian* mode of being.

All these gradations are as unified as any series of metaphysical ascent is in Proclus. Each one is the higher order virtue at a lower level of realization. After giving Proclus' systematization of the Iamblican grades of virtue, Damascius says:

all reveal their constant universal character in a way peculiar to each level: thus the character of courage is unwavering firmness with respect to the inferior, of temperance the turning away from the inferior, of justice an activity that is proper to the subject and truly belonging to it, and of prudence the ability to choose the good and reject the bad. (*in Phd.* I 149; tr. Westerink)

This insistence that *some* sort of similarity is preserved among all the gradations of, say, courage is somewhat plausible if we confine our attention to the purificatory and political virtues, but so little is clear about the theoretical ones that it is hard to see how this common thread is manifested in the soul's relation to intellect.

Proclus also tells us that the individual political virtues—which all belong to the same grade—correspond to different *vertical* grades of virtue:

Self-control (*σωφροσύνη*) especially characterizes ethical virtue (since there is nothing so appropriate to those who are being instructed as self-control). Justice, however, especially characterizes political virtue (for the ordering of other things [that is the function of justice] in particular requires determining the relative value of each one). Courage [corresponds to the level of] kathartic virtue (for it especially pertains to this virtue to be invulnerable to the passions that have been established within us as our true opponents). Wisdom [corresponds to the level of] theoretic virtue, for the distinctive feature of contemplation (*θεωρία*) is to think that which must be thought about the things that are. (*in Remp.* I 12.26–13.6)

This gives us a nice illustration of the Iamblican and Proclean dictum: 'all things in all, but in each in a manner appropriate to the subject'.<sup>11</sup> Considered vertically, each of the cardinal virtues is (somehow) present in each of the gradations. On the horizontal level, each of the virtues at the political level is (in some sense) one of the gradations of virtue.

When we turn to the account of the civic virtues in Proclus' *Commentary on the Republic* (Essay VII) we see a similar use of relations to distinguish virtues and parts of the soul. Strictly speaking, the virtues are qualities that allow something alive to perform its function well and thus to live well. So virtues will correlate with a way of life or a *zôê*. Plato's *Republic* frequently treats the parts of the soul as if each were a sub-personal agent. Proclus follows this at least to the extent of treating each of the parts of the soul as if it were an internal psychic counterpart of the lifestyle or *zôê* characteristic of different

types of persons—the classes of Guardians, Auxiliaries, and Producers.<sup>12</sup> He distinguishes the function or *ergon* of each part of the soul considered in itself or *kath'hauto* from its function within the quasi-community of the *psychê* considered as a whole. Thus, the reasoning part of the soul or *logistikôn* performs its *kath'hauto* function when it lives in a manner that is purified and contemplative (*in Remp.* I 208.5–10)—i.e. when it manifests the kathartic and theoretic virtues. But when we consider reason's function within the psychic polis, its relational *ergon*—and thus its virtue—is to rule the spirited and the appetitive parts. Similarly too for the spirited part: when it is concerned only with its own business, it functions well when it inclines the person to visit honourable revenge for slights to his or her dignity. However, considered as a citizen of the inner polis, the spirited part or *thumos* is both ruled by reason and collaborates with reason in ruling over appetite or *epithumia*. This yields a typically Proclean instance of the law of mean terms. The general pattern of metaphysical descent through a middle term that combines both extremes—A : A&B : B—is exhibited by Ruling (reason) : Ruling-and-Ruled (spirit) : Ruled (appetite).

These examples provide something of the flavour of Proclus' engagement with Platonic texts where the virtues and happiness are at issue. We can see how he brings principles from his metaphysics to bear on the project of constructing a Neoplatonic virtue ethics in which the virtues are dispositions that make one resemble the gods.<sup>13</sup> But Plato's dialogues are not the only raw materials for the construction of this Neoplatonic virtue ethics. Another important source is the *Chaldaean Oracles*. The highest gradations of the virtues and the assimilation to the gods through theurgic ritual is discussed by Van den Berg in Chapter 11. Note, however, that this division of labour in our *presentation* of Proclus' views on the virtues is not matched by any sharp division in Proclus' own thinking on the subject. Philosophy and theurgy are intertwined at every level of moral progress to unification with god.

### 13.3. THE PHILOSOPHICAL CURRICULUM AND THE VIRTUES

How do we acquire the different gradations of the virtues? The natural virtues are, of course, natural bodily endowments. The ethical virtues, we are told, arise from habituation and true opinion (Dam., *in Phd.* I 139). Since the political, purificatory, and theoretical virtues are virtues *of reason* it is initially plausible that we might gain them by means of *learning* something. But what?

The answer, of course, is that the virtues are correlated with the reading order of the Platonic dialogues introduced by Iamblichus:<sup>14</sup>

## Introductory

Knowledge of the self—*Alcibiades I*

## Ethical virtues

Political virtues—*Gorgias* [and *Republic*]<sup>15</sup>Purificatory virtues—*Phaedo*

## Theoretical virtues

Concerning names—*Cratylus*Concerning the objects of thought—*Theaetetus*

Concerning things

Nature—*Sophist* and *Statesman*Gods—*Phaedrus* and *Symposium*<sup>16</sup>

## Synoptic

Concerning the good as immanent—*Philebus*

Two capstone dialogues then formed a second cycle in which the student achieved the highest level of physical understanding (*Timaeus*) and theological understanding (*Parmenides*).

How are Plato's dialogues meant to relate to the various gradations of the virtues? The absence of any dialogue corresponding to the natural or ethical virtues recommends the hypothesis that the dialogues *tell us* about these virtues. Given a strongly cognitive theory of virtue—perhaps one that treats them as a kind of knowledge—this might appear sufficient for the acquisition of these virtues. But this, I think, would be a mistake. First, even if one takes virtues to be knowledge of a certain sort, it is not clear that merely acquiring some information is sufficient for having that virtue. In the Stoic view, the virtue of, say, courage is identified with a kind of knowledge: it is 'the *epistêmê* of things that are fearful and things that are not' (Stobaeus II 59.4 = SVF 3.262). Simply reading a book about what is to be feared is not sufficient for having the *epistêmê*, for an *epistêmê* differs from mere assent to a true and reliable impression (*katalêpsis*) because the latter involves a systematic pattern of firm and infallible judgements. One does not get that merely from a book. Moreover, Proclus himself warns against consuming the books of Plato without a proper teacher (Mar., V. *Proc.* § 38). I think this is not merely a concern that readers are apt to misunderstand Plato and thus fail to correctly identify the information contained in the dialogues—information which, when assimilated thoroughly, would endow the reader with political or kathartic or theoretical virtues. In his *Commentary on the Alcibiades*, Proclus distinguishes explicitly between the theme or *skopos* of the dialogue—what it is about—and the *telos* or goal of understanding it.

Even if one were to say that the *telos* for the dialogue is the *care* of the self and the understanding of this—though this is rightly said—let such a person understand that this [care of the self] applies to us as an end (*τέλος*) or as the good that results



from what is demonstrated [in the dialogue]. But what is sought is a subject for research (πρόβλημα) and that for the sake of which the syllogisms in the dialogue exist—the *knowledge* of the self, for it is one thing to know the *skopos* of the dialogue but another to know the good that results from its having such a theme.  
(in *Alc.* 9.16–10.3)

We might add that to *possess* the good that results from each dialogue's having such and such a theme is yet a third thing. How does reading a text with a master such as Proclus bring it about that the young philosopher's soul comes to possess the necessary virtues?

To bridge this gap, I would like to recommend the notion of a 'perlocutionary hermeneutics'. I think Proclus believed that parties to his readings of the canonical texts within the school were psychically transformed for the better through the act of reading and interpreting the texts of Plato with a master. In support of this contention, one should consider the opening remarks of Proclus' *Platonic Theology*. Proclus tells us that Plato's philosophy contains not merely theology—a true *logos* about the gods—but is a *mystagôgê* concerning the very gods themselves. Rather than simply *telling* us the truth, it *initiates* such souls as are capable of being liberated into the real mysteries. Those who genuinely cling to the blessed and happy life will participate in the culminating revelation of the mystery ceremony, but in a way that is stable and perfect in every way (*Theol. plat.* I 1, 5.16–6.7).

The mystagogic character of Plato's texts fits well with the notion of textual communities. When Brian Stock, who coined the term, described such communities he said that:

Within the movement, texts were steps, so to speak, by which the individual climbed toward a perfection thought to represent complete understanding and effortless communication with God. (Stock 1983: 90)

The notion of texts as steps, however, is ambiguous. On the one hand, it could mean that the authoritative texts *tell us what we need to know* in order to effect communion with god, e.g. how to pray, or what kathartic virtues are. On the other hand, it could mean that *through* the act of interpreting the texts members of the community are *changed* in such a way as to be assimilated to god. In the case of the Platonic schools, I think it is the latter and that this change comes about through *internalizing ways of seeing oneself and the world that are in Plato's dialogues*. Members of the community seek to live 'in and through' ideals and concepts found in the Neoplatonic understandings of the dialogues. This idea of living 'in and through' texts warrants a fuller exploration.

Brown (1992) conveys the way in which an educated Roman's ability to model his written and spoken speech on ancient paradigms and to allude to the canonical texts of a 'gentleman's education' in late antiquity created a class identity. To be educated—to be a participant in *paideia*—was similarly a matter of transforming oneself in accordance with a text. The educated

gentleman was one who had fashioned his written and spoken speech after the exemplars of Homer, Demosthenes, and, to a somewhat lesser extent, Plato. (Though a gentleman need not have studied Plato with a philosopher. A school of rhetoric, like that of Libanius, could endow one with a reasonable acquaintance with Plato as a stylist.) An educated man would have acquired a sense of decorum that could be articulated through selected classical allusions. Thus Libanius (*Or.* 46.3) could assess the cultural credentials of the newly arrived governor of Antioch by posing this question about his intentions: 'How did Odysseus rule when king of Ithaca?' The newly arrived governor could then display his membership card in the class of cultural elites by quoting the relevant line of Homer: 'Gently as a father' (*Od.* 2.223). Each party to the conversation shows that he shares a common stock of knowledge that sets both participants apart from *hoi polloi* and in so doing each makes a claim upon the other to be treated in a certain way.

Let us say that the educated elite of the late Roman empire lived their lives *around* a canon of classical authors rather than *in* and *through* them. Many who had the benefit of *paideia* did doubtless see themselves and the world in terms of beliefs and concepts derived from the canonical authors. How could this education not have *some* effect upon one's outlook? But *paideia* functioned principally as an *external marker* of class distinction. By contrast, the Neoplatonic textual communities sought to internalize ideals, concepts, and images from the dialogues in order to change the way that members of the community thought—not in order that they might be *seen to be* people with a certain kind of learning, but in order to ascend to the divine.

This difference does not simply mark a distinction between philosophical and non-philosophical engagement with texts. As Hadot taught us, *all* ancient philosophies were also ways of life. However, we can contrast the psychic transformation that Epictetus sought to effect in his discourses with the Neoplatonic aim of living in and through the texts of Plato. Epictetus sought to use images and analogies to get his auditors to think differently. At various points he urges his audience to conceive themselves and things around them in one way or another. For instance, imagine your loved ones as being like any breakable object—a cup perhaps—so that when they die you are not surprised or distressed (*Ench.* § 3). These reimaginings are drawn from reflections on life for the purpose of training the power of assent so that it operates in accordance with the precept that one should not assent to things that are incognitive.<sup>17</sup> Compare this with a rather typical passage from Proclus' *Alcibiades* commentary, 189.15ff., where Proclus wishes to call our attention to a similarity between the wise person and the fool. Neither one 'goes outside himself' in search of anything—the former because he has the *logoi* of the Forms within and in knowing himself knows them, the latter because he is simply unaware that he is ignorant. The relation of the latter to the former is thus like the relationship between god and matter. This is the 'likeness of unlikeness'. God

is formless as superior to form, matter is formless as the last dregs of being. In the next few lines, Proclus equates the wise person with Resource or *Poros* in Plato's image from *Symposium* 203b. Here again, the theme of the wise person's self-sufficiency is elaborated in terms drawn from Plato's dialogues—or rather, in terms drawn from the Neoplatonic reading of Plato's dialogues.

The auditors of Proclus' lectures are invited to see themselves and the goal of their striving 'in and through' the Platonic dialogues. Unlike Epictetus, who uses images drawn from life to discipline his students to a goal that can be described independently of any inspired and authoritative text, Proclus' lectures are mystagogic. They initiate the audience into patterns of semantic association, and thus ways of seeing, whose successful internalization *cannot be fully articulated independently of the text in which they are based*.

This, at least, is the hypothesis that I wish to recommend. The argument for it is essentially an inference to the best explanation. Proclus (as well as the other Neoplatonists) produced their commentaries as part of an educational process married to the idea of progression through gradations of virtues. But the written products of that educational process bear no obvious connection to these virtues, nor are the virtues themselves ever described—as the Stoic virtues are—as an *epistêmê* set over any subject matter. One possible explanation, of course, is that the Neoplatonic curriculum and the grades of virtue are merely a pretext for an arid scholasticism that bears no relation to any ethical goal. I have sought to provide a more charitable explanation: the commentaries serve to assist the members of the textual community to live in and through the Platonic canon. This alternative hypothesis might gain support through further analysis of Proclus' commentaries that is not merely philosophical, but rather rhetorical or psychagogic. This, however, is work for the future.

#### 13.4. POLITICAL PHILOSOPHY

Thus far we have been concerned with the moral progress of the *individual* towards the goal of becoming like god. But it seems initially plausible that a Platonic philosopher should have something to say about political philosophy too, since Plato himself wrote two lengthy dialogues outlining the political and educational arrangements that should obtain in the ideal polis. Much could be (and has been) said about Neoplatonic political philosophy.<sup>18</sup> I will focus only on one small puzzle that will serve to take us back to our beginning: metaphysics and its relation to ethics.

A standing puzzle about Plato's *Republic* concerns the motivation for the philosopher-rulers to return from their contemplative activities—activities that are objectively most pleasant and fill the soul with what is truly real—to engage in the political life of the polis. It might initially seem that Proclus

would inherit this problem in a particularly vexed form since so much of what he writes concerns the soul's ascent up from the world of Becoming to the contemplation of intelligibles. The absolutely central role of the *Timaeus* in his Neoplatonism, however, provides a ready resolution of this Platonic puzzle. The figure of the Demiurge provides a suitable paradigm for the philosopher who has been assimilated to the divine. The Demiurge exercises an effortless providence over the sensible universe that eternally depends upon him. Yet he does this without ever turning his attention from the intelligible paradigm on which the sensible copy is modelled. It turns out that the philosopher does the same thing.

Proclus frequently presents the cosmos as an analogue to the well-governed political community (cf. O'Meara 2003: 94–8). Specifically with reference to the *Republic*, the philosopher-rulers are analogous to the gods who are the causes of all things, while the auxiliaries are analogous to the *daimones* who serve these gods as intermediaries (*in Remp.* II 3.5–10). The more numerous producers in the ideal city are analogous to the souls that are elevated or dragged down by the daimonic intermediaries (*in Remp.* II 99.13–14) in accordance with the laws of fate that govern the whole cosmos. Perhaps echoing *Timaeus* 90b–d, Proclus regards the movements of the celestial gods (i.e. the stars and planets) as a visible model of political justice:

The *politeia* among the things that circulate around the heavens is of this character [i.e. just] since it is one where injustice is neither perpetrated nor suffered, but everything in the cosmos is borne along by an order and life lived in common with one another. Each provides its own contribution toward constituting the whole when it *does its own [task]*, and each has a ready propensity for being one. (*in Remp.* II 325.24–9)

The visible cosmos also provides a suitable paradigm for the philosopher-statesman since the most basic elements of the cosmos are bound together by geometric proportion (*Tim.* 31c5–32c4) and the World Soul that animates it includes the harmonic and arithmetic proportions as well (*Tim.* 35b2–36b5). Each of these proportions is endowed by Proclus with a moral and political significance.<sup>19</sup> Thus the arithmetic proportion is Peace, since it involves equality—something which placates the *dēmos*. Geometric proportion is said to belong to *Eunomia* or Good Order, which Plato himself called ‘the judgment of Zeus’ (*Leg.* VI 757b6). This proportion orders the cosmos and includes within itself the science of politics. Justice corresponds to the harmonic proportion since it assigns the greater proportion to the greater and the lesser to the lesser. So both the behaviour of the heavenly bodies and the proportions that structure the World Soul provide abstract paradigms which the philosopher-statesman must imitate in acting as Demiurge for a political micro-cosmos.

The political community described in the *Republic* provides the first and most divine image of the cosmic *politeia* (*in Remp.* I 10.4–8; II 8.15ff.), while

that of the *Laws* is a second, less perfect one. The Neoplatonists in general regarded *Laws* V 739b as the key text for clarifying the relation between Plato's works. The ideal *politeia* of the *Republic* is ideal precisely because it is more *unified* and thus more closely approximates the single divine organism that is the cosmos. The *Laws* passage also mentions a third, even lower *politeia* (739e5), and this affords Proclus the opportunity for lining up three demiurges with three progressively less unified paradigms for the ideal political community: Zeus, Dionysus, and Adonis. Every statesman models himself on one of these demiurges. The one who imitates Zeus seems to play a unifying role, while the one who imitates Dionysus—who was himself torn apart—engages in drawing distinctions. (Perhaps this statesman's role corresponds more closely to the judicial branch of the political art, while the former corresponds to the legislative one.<sup>20</sup>) The statesman who imitates Adonis, the sublunary demiurge, seems to engage in some sort of remedial work on things here in the realm of Becoming.<sup>21</sup>

I suspect that this Adonis-type statesman may correspond to Proclus' own political and educative role as head of the Athenian School.<sup>22</sup> Within the context of an officially Christian Empire—at least notionally—the ability of the Platonic Diadochus to aim at the more ambitious forms of statesmanship would have been seriously compromised. Marinus tells us that Proclus addressed the Assembly and guided their decisions about matters of justice (*V. Proc.* § 15). In addressing the Assembly he exhorted them and compelled them by his frankness of speech—not, notably, by any other kind of authority. What matters of justice could he have discussed with them? In the next sentence Marinus tells us that he took an interest in the orderly conduct of teachers and students in the sleepy university town that was Athens in the fifth century AD. I suspect that such influence as Proclus may have exercised over matters beyond those pertaining to the schools was exercised through powerful Athenian benefactors such as Rufinus, Asclepiodotus, and Theagenes. In spite of these powerful allies, it appears that, at some point in his tenure as head of the Academy, Proclus overstepped some mark and went into exile for a year. The circumstances of this are not known, but the fact that Marinus tells us that Proclus retreated from 'vulture-like men' suggests some problem with Athens' Christians.<sup>23</sup> It is possible that he spoke out too loudly against the desecration of the Parthenon or the conversion of the temple of Asclepius.

Whatever the exact circumstances, there is little doubt that Proclus would have regarded a Christian Empire as a terrible political development. This is not merely because of the Christians' incursions into specific sites of *civic* cult such as the Parthenon, as bad as this might be. More generally, Christianity undermines the whole political project from Proclus' point of view. The goal of political activity is making the state resemble the divine through political unity and *homonoia*. But because Christianity draws a sharp line between the Creator and the world He produces, the most proximate paradigms for the

demiurgic statesman to consult—the heavens and the sensible cosmos as a whole—are regarded as void of divinity and organic unity. Worse yet, the Christians regarded the sensible cosmos as temporally created and, further, subject to an actual dissolution. Yet nothing modelled upon such a perishable paradigm could be made well (cf. *Tim.* 28a9–b3). If the universe is no longer a visible god (*Tim.* 30b7–8), the statesman has no compass by reference to which he could steer the ship of state. Considered from this perspective, a work of pure metaphysics like Proclus' treatise *On the Eternity of the World* has a political point. To preserve the visible cosmos as eternal (and thus divine) is a precondition for the possibility of the art of politics—at least for souls such as ours, which are entirely descended into Becoming and thus separated from intelligible paradigms for political unity and justice.

With this observation about the moral and political salience of the world's eternity, we return to where we began. Proclus' philosophy seems to be dominated by metaphysics, and in particular by accounts of the various levels at which divinity is manifested from the One to the stars and planets who are visible gods. We can see that metaphysics and theology have an ethical as well as a political point when we consider that the good consists in assimilation to the divine. We need to understand that which we are to become like. Hence the centrality of these subjects in Proclus' works. Our becoming godlike, however, is not merely a matter of having some abstract understanding of what a god is like. Rather, we become godlike through living in and through the texts of Plato's dialogues. These works are not merely a source of information that could be acquired elsewhere. Rather, the Platonic canon, broadly conceived, is mystagogic. The Platonic diadochus acts towards his students as the *Timaeus'* Demiurge acts towards the world. By unifying their experience of reading Plato with the inspired tradition of the *Chaldaean Oracles* and the Orphic poems, he seeks to transform the very categories in terms of which they think and experience. The acquisition of the various grades of virtues is the series of psychic transformations that is supposed to result from coming to see oneself and the world in and through the Platonic dialogues. This participation in a textual community is a deeper and more personal version of the late antique notion of *paideia*—an education through which the elites of the Roman empire came to speak and write in ways that alluded to classical texts more generally.

## NOTES

1. For the various orders of gods in Proclus' metaphysics, see Ch. 10 in this volume.
2. For the modern rediscovery of this aspect of Plato's thought, see Sedley (1997a, 1999), Annas (1999), Russell (2004), and Armstrong (2004).
3. *Theol. plat.* I 16, 80.4; in *Tim.* I 5.29–6.6; *De mal.* 43.11.

4. Cf. Steel (1978) for the response to the unfallen soul in Iamblichus, Damascius, and Priscianus. See Steel (1978: 69–73) for Proclus in particular.
5. For the idea of the soul's astral and pneumatic bodies, see Ch. 6 in this volume.
6. For the cosmos' perception, see Lautner (2006) and Baltzly (2009a).
7. For an exploration of this tension, see Baltzly (2004).
8. There are some complications with this list. Marinus' biography of Proclus begins by listing all the gradations of virtues. He seeks to show in his biography how his subject enjoyed them all. The paradigmatic virtues are missing from Marinus' enumeration: the theoretic virtues are followed by the 'theurgic' virtues. The latter are presumably synonymous with the hieratic virtues in Damascius' report. Marinus then says 'as to those that are higher even than these we shall keep silence, because they exceed the human condition'. Edwards (2000: 60 n. 34) supposes that these higher virtues must be paradigmatic ones, citing Porphyry, *Sent.* 32, where Porphyry says that whoever has the virtues relating to the intellect is a god, while the one who has the paradigmatic virtues is the *father* of a god. If, however, we look forward to Olympiodorus' *Commentary on the Phaedo* a rather different picture emerges. According to Olympiodorus, the paradigmatic virtues are initially distinct from the human subject, just as the human eye is initially distinct from the source of sunlight when it is illuminated by the sun. It is merely a recipient. Subsequently, however, 'it is in some way joined to it and becomes as it were one [with it] and "sun-like", so too our soul is at first illuminated by nous and is active due to intellect in accordance with theoretic virtues but afterwards it becomes in a way that which is the source of the illumination and acts in a uniform (*henoeidôs*) manner in accordance with the paradigmatic virtues' (VIII 2.15–16 Westerink). Olympiodorus gives us a pithy division of labour: the job of philosophy is to *make us intelligent* [or intelligence—*noun poiêsai*], while the job of theurgy is to *unify us with* the intelligibles.
9. Dam., in *Phd.* I 144.1–3: 'Ὅτι εἰσὶ καὶ αἱ ἱερατικαὶ ἀρεταί, κατὰ τὸ θεοειδὲς ὑφιστάμεναι τῆς ψυχῆς, ἀντιπαρήκουσαι πάσαις ταῖς εἰρημέναις οὐσιώδεσιν οὗσαι ἐνιαυαί γε ὑπάρχουσαι. Westerink translates: 'they correspond to all the categories mentioned above, with this difference that while the others are existential, these are unitary'. I myself have a hard time seeing how γε provides the required opposition or what work Westerink supposes οὐσιώδεσιν to be doing.
10. Even the natural virtues can be thought of in something like this manner. In his biography of Proclus, Marinus insists that natural endowments like keen eyesight or a sturdy physical constitution are corporeal reflections of the cardinal virtues. Keen eyesight is the 'wisdom of the body', while a strong physical constitution is the bodily counterpart to the soul's courage. Cf. *V. Proc.* § 3.
11. For this general principle, see Ch. 3 in this volume.
12. I find that I am not persuaded by Perkams (2006) that Proclus regarded the parts of the soul as distinct substances. For what seems to me one telling criticism of this view, see MacIsaac (2009: 123 n. 127).
13. For more along these lines, see Abbate (2006).
14. See Ch. 2 (on the Platonic tradition) in this volume.
15. Cf. in *Remp.* I 206.6–7. The *Republic* appears in brackets here because it was not a part of the normal course of study.

16. Westerink (1962: p. xl).
17. Hadot (1992) examines Marcus Aurelius' *Meditations* as a set of spiritual exercises, not as a repository of Stoic doctrine.
18. See the ground-breaking study of O'Meara (2003).
19. *In Tim.* II 198.14–25 and 316.29–317.3. More generally see Ausland (2006).
20. On this distinction, see O'Meara (2003: 87–115).
21. *In Remp.* II 8.17–21 On the levels of demiurgy in Proclus, see Opsomer (2000a: 123), as well as Ch. 7 in this volume.
22. The διάστροφον εἶδος that the Adonis-like statesman corrects is likely to correspond to the distortion of the individual soul's circle of the Different as a result of its descent into the sublunary realm of Becoming; cf. *in Tim.* III 340.8–12.
23. For coded references to Christians in Proclus, see Saffrey (1975).



## Literary Theory and Aesthetics

*Anne Sheppard*

Neoplatonism has been enormously influential on European thought about the arts, and Neoplatonist aesthetics has received attention from philosophers and literary theorists who have little interest in other aspects of Neoplatonic thought. Notoriously, Plato's own discussions of art and beauty raise problems: in the *Republic* he argues strongly that both painting and poetry are mimetic, do not convey knowledge, and have a dangerous power over the emotions; in consequence, many passages of Homer and tragedy are explicitly criticized and most poetry is to be expelled from the ideal state. Elsewhere, particularly in the *Ion* and the *Phaedrus*, it is acknowledged that at least some poetry is inspired, although Plato's attitude to poetic inspiration appears ambivalent. In *Republic* III the emotional power of music is regarded with some suspicion, but in *Republic* VII and the *Timaeus* music is linked to the mathematical structure of the universe. Meanwhile, Plato's discussions of beauty, *to kalon*, are largely distinct from his discussions of what we call the arts. In the *Symposium*, the *Phaedrus*, and the *Timaeus* the beauty of the visible world is treated as a manifestation of intelligible beauty, capable of prompting us to an awareness of the divine beauty of the Platonic Forms. The Neoplatonists inherit this complex web of Platonic views on aesthetic topics, itself the subject of considerable discussion from Plato's time to their own. At the same time they were well aware of wider discussion of the arts within ancient Greek culture, particularly the rich tradition of interpreting Homer and the treatment of music associated with the Pythagoreans.

In Proclus' case, some of his ideas about literature, notably his theory of inspired poetry, have attracted considerable interest but have not always been set within the context of either his relationship to Greek literary culture or his overall philosophy. In this chapter I begin with Proclus' relationship to the broader study of literature in late antiquity before turning to a discussion of his literary theory and his use of allegorical interpretation. I shall then set that literary theory in the wider context of Neoplatonist aesthetics and consider

how Proclus' views of both visual art and music also fit into that context. Discussion of aesthetics will lead us from art to beauty and to the way in which Proclus articulates a typically Platonist position on the place of *to kalon* in the universe. Aesthetics thus leads to metaphysics, and, indeed, it could be argued that for Proclus, as for other Neoplatonists, there is no separate aesthetic theory distinct from metaphysics. I shall end the chapter by emphasizing the importance of what might be called 'the aesthetic point of view' within Proclus' metaphysics, and the key role played in his philosophy by analogies drawn from literary theory and aesthetics.

#### 14.1. PROCLUS AND GREEK LITERARY CULTURE

It is easy to forget that by Proclus' time rhetoric was a standard part of education and that most of the later Neoplatonists were well educated in rhetoric. Proclus' teacher, Syrianus, wrote a commentary on Hermogenes and concepts and terminology drawn from the rhetorical tradition in ancient literary criticism appear in the *Commentary on Plato's Phaedrus* by Proclus' fellow-student Hermias which reports Syrianus' lectures on that dialogue.<sup>1</sup> Proclus himself studied rhetoric in Alexandria in his youth, according to Marinus, and had contact in Athens with the rhetor Nicolaus of Myra.<sup>2</sup> His allegorical interpretations of Homer and Hesiod, discussed further in this chapter, draw on a wide range of earlier commentary on these poets and his commentaries on Plato contain many passages which comment on matters such as Plato's style or his skill in characterization, using the language and approach of 'rhetorical' criticism.<sup>3</sup> The following two passages, one from the *Commentary on the Republic*, the other from the *Commentary on the Timaeus*, are particularly striking:

Plato first of all follows meticulously the stylistic form of the Homeric *mimesis*. The characters of all those who appear in the dialogues are developed and the qualities of their lives passed on to us with a vividness (*ἐνάργεια*) equal to that with which Homer described the heroes, and both writers present their characters virtually as if they were present and expressing their own opinions and alive before us. . . . Indeed the representation (*μίμησις*) of these men moves our imagination in many ways and changes our opinions, adjusting them to the changing subject-matter. . . . We seem to be actually present at the events on account of the vivid presentation (*ἐναργῆ φαντασίαν*) of the things imitated, generated in us by the representation (*μίμησις*).

(in *Remp.* I 163.19–164.7; tr. adapted from Lambertson 1979)

Here we find Proclus talking not only of *mimêsis* but also of *enargeia*, 'vividness', and of *phantasia* in the sense of 'visualization', in a way which

was common in the rhetorical tradition from the first century AD onwards.<sup>4</sup> Similarly, his comments in the *Timaeus* commentary on the puzzling style of address *theoi theôn* ('Gods of gods') at 41a comment on Plato's style in the language of 'rhetorical' criticism:

The style (χαρακτήρ) of the words is inspired (ἐνθουσιαστικός) in being conspicuous for intellectual thoughts, pure and lofty (σεμνός) in being perfected by the gods themselves, quite different (ἐξέλλαγμένος) from and superior to human conceptions, at once powerful (ἄδρός) and striking (καταπληκτικός) and filled with grace (χάριτες), full of beauty (κάλλος) and at the same time concise (σύντομος) and finished (ἀπηκριβωμένος). (*in Tim.* III 199.29–200.3; my tr.)

A number of the terms Proclus uses here, such as *charaktêr* (style), *semnos* (lofty), *exêllagmenos* (different), *hadros* (powerful), and *suntomos* (concise), are standard terms of Greek literary criticism, while others such as *enthousiastikos* (inspired) and *apêkribômenos* (finished) are terms from the Platonic corpus. The combination of the two is characteristic of Proclus' way of writing about literary style, as one who was both well educated in the critical 'jargon' of his time and at the same time steeped in the text of Plato.

#### 14.2. LITERARY THEORY: INSPIRED POETRY AND ALLEGORICAL INTERPRETATION

So far there is nothing original, and nothing particularly philosophical, in Proclus' way of writing about literature, although his activity as a literary critic deserves more recognition and better understanding than it has usually received. However, his name appears quite widely in discussions of ancient literary criticism and theory,<sup>5</sup> not because of this activity but because of his theory of inspired poetry. Proclus offers two different versions of this theory, one in the fifth essay of his *Commentary on the Republic* and in his *Commentary on the Timaeus*, the other, rather better known, in the sixth essay of the *Republic* commentary.

In the fifth essay on the *Republic*, at *in Remp.* I 57.23–58.27, inspired poetry is described as having an educational function, presenting good models for young people to emulate. According to this account, such poetry deals with noble examples of past heroic deeds, recalling the kind of poetry which Plato is prepared to admit into the ideal state in *Republic* III. A little later in the same essay, *in Remp.* I 60.8 mentions briefly a possible division of poetry into inspired and uninspired but still implies that all poetry is educational. A similar division appears at *in Tim.* I 64.13–65.3 where Proclus distinguishes between inspired poetry which comes from the gods and uninspired poetry which is the product of human skill (*technê*). That passage

occurs in the course of discussing the remarks about poets at *Timaetus* 19d–e and appears to reflect the views of Proclus' teacher, Syrianus, concerning *Phaedrus* 245a on inspired and uninspired poetry.<sup>6</sup> This bipartite division of types of poetry may belong to the beginning of Proclus' career as a philosopher and interpreter of Plato.

In the sixth essay of the *Republic* commentary we find a more complex division of poetry into three types and a bolder notion of inspired poetry. In that essay Proclus defends Homer against Plato's attack on his poetry in the *Republic*. The main part of this defence consists of extended allegorical interpretations of the passages of Homer criticized in *Republic* II and III. At the end of the essay (*in Remp.* I 177.7–205.23), Proclus responds to the criticisms put forward in *Republic* X and in particular to the charge that, as mimetic poetry, Homer's work is only a low-grade copy of a copy, 'third from reality'. He argues that there are three kinds of poetry, corresponding to three types of life. First comes inspired poetry which corresponds to the type of life in which the 'one in the soul' is united with the gods. Then, in the middle, there is an educational kind of poetry which offers moral advice, related to the life in which the soul operates in accordance with intellect and knowledge. Finally, there is mimetic poetry, corresponding to the life in which the soul descends to using 'irrational images and perceptions'. Mimetic poetry in turn is subdivided into 'eikastic' poetry which aims at correct copying and 'phantastic', concerned only with presenting an apparent likeness. Proclus finds authority in Plato for all three (or four) types of poetry, appealing to the *Ion* and the *Phaedrus* as the basis for his account of inspired poetry and to *Republic* X for his account of mimetic poetry, with additional backing from *Sophist* 235d–236c for the division of mimetic poetry into eikastic and phantastic. He offers Homeric examples of all the proposed types and also, picking up Plato, *Leg.* I 630a, cites Theognis and Tyrtaeus as examples of the middle kind of poetry which offers moral advice. He then proceeds to use his theory to defend Homer, arguing that most of Homer's work is inspired, not mimetic. Inspired poetry here is symbolic, capable of representing things even by their opposites (*in Remp.* I 198.18–19); to understand it requires the kind of allegorical interpretation which Proclus spends most of the sixth essay expounding.<sup>7</sup>

The concept of inspired poetry found in the sixth essay of the *Republic* commentary and the associated belief that literature can present truths in symbolic form underpin not only the allegorical interpretations of Homer in that essay but also Proclus' allegorical interpretation of Plato's myths.<sup>8</sup> The notion that mythical stories are symbolic reappears in a passage near the beginning of Proclus' commentary on the myth of Er in the *Republic*:

Since ... souls have become emotional instead of impassive and inclined to give things shape instead of having no concern with shape, it is reasonable to say that

using this kind of story is an appropriate way of teaching them; these stories contain within them a great deal of the intellectual light of truth, but the fictional element forms a screen in front, concealing it with imitation, as imagination in us obscures our individual intellect. . . . As for the kind of story which is fictional outside but intellectual inside . . . this corresponds to those who are a combination and have a double intellect—the one which we really are and the one which we have put on and use as a screen. . . . Just as, if we are using our imaginations, we should employ images that are pure and not polluted by any base imaginings, so too, I suppose, mythical stories should have an outer dress appropriate to the intellectual figures within. That is why Plato rejected the telling of mythical stories in poetry, because they fill uninitiated souls with vulgar meanings.

(in *Remp.* II 107.21–108.6; tr. Bychkov and Sheppard)

In this passage, ‘the telling of mythical stories in poetry’ is explicitly rejected, but myths with an ‘appropriate outer dress’, which are ‘intellectual inside’, are admitted. The implication is that Plato’s myth of Er is just such a story—enjoyable at a literal level, but requiring allegorical interpretation if we are to understand it fully. In *Theol. plat.* I 4 Proclus discusses four different ways in which Plato expounds theology and makes a distinction between the inspired and the symbolic which he does not use in the *Republic* commentary.<sup>9</sup> However that inconsistency should be explained, Proclus’ belief that both poetry and philosophical writing contain passages which are inspired and require allegorical interpretation is the keystone of his approach to literature. We should not forget that Proclus did write poetry himself. His own *Hymns* are the kind of poetry of which Plato even at his most severe would have approved and they seem to be a deliberate attempt to write inspired, symbolic poetry.<sup>10</sup> We shall see shortly that Proclus treats both visual art and music in the same way as he treats literature. More generally, allegorical interpretation appears in all types of Proclean exegesis, be it of mathematics, oracles, or religious rites, and follows naturally from his Platonist metaphysics.<sup>11</sup> As we shall see at the end of the chapter, this is why for Proclus there is no real distinction between aesthetics and metaphysics.

### 14.3. VISUAL ART AND STATUES OF THE GODS

Proclus’ interest in Homer also appears in two of his rare comments on visual art. In the *Timaean* commentary he uses a traditional example, Phidias’ statue of Zeus, to make his point:

So too Phidias who made the statue of Zeus did not look at something that has come to be but arrived at a notion of the Homeric Zeus. If he had actually been able to reach the intellectual god himself, clearly his own work would have been a finer achievement. Beauty, or the lack of it, comes to the image from the model,

likeness or unlikeness to the archetype comes from the sculptor. 'Image' (εἰκών) is used of both, both the copy of the model and the work and product of the sculptor. (in *Tim.* I 265.18–26; tr. Bychkov and Sheppard)

Plotinus mentions Phidias' Zeus in *Enn.* V 8 [31] 1 as part of his argument that the arts do not simply imitate natural things but go back to the rational principles (*logoi*) from which nature derives. This passage of Plotinus, building on ideas already found in Cicero and Seneca and perhaps going back to Antiochus of Ascalon, opened the way to a re-evaluation of art within the Platonist tradition.<sup>12</sup> Proclus shares Plotinus' approach to visual art but offers a slightly different account of Phidias' Zeus. For him Phidias' conception is of the Homeric Zeus rather than 'the intellectual god himself'; presumably this is because Phidias' statue, like the descriptions of Zeus in Homer, has the appearance of a majestic human being. To grasp the intellectual, or intellective, god, we need to understand that the Homeric descriptions are themselves symbolic.<sup>13</sup> Similarly in the *Parmenides* commentary, at in *Parm.* IV 851.25–852.6, Proclus declares that one who has seen Athena as she is described in *Il.* 5.734–7 will paint a better picture of her than one who copies Phidias' statue of the goddess.<sup>14</sup>

In the surviving excerpts from Proclus' *Commentary on the Cratylus*, we find another reference to visual art which confirms Proclus' general acceptance of the Plotinian view. Proclus holds that names/words (*onomata*) are images of a particular kind—*agalmata*, a word he otherwise uses to refer to statues of the gods.<sup>15</sup> In *Crat.* 17, 7.8–8.14 considers four senses in which things may be natural, of which the third is that they may be like shadows and reflections in mirrors while the fourth is that they may be like images fashioned by art (*technêtai eikones*) which resemble their archetypes. The comparison with shadows and reflections in mirrors recalls not only *Republic* X but the Divided Line in *Republic* VI (especially 510a and e). Yet it is the fourth sense of 'natural', not the third, which Proclus attributes to Socrates, implying again the view of art as reflecting higher realities, not the physical world, which became so popular among later Platonists.<sup>16</sup>

Phidias' Zeus was a statue in a temple, to be worshipped, not an art object placed in a museum. It should not surprise us that Proclus' occasional comments on statues as products of human skill (*technê*) are not really comments on statues as what we would call 'works of art'. Nevertheless, like Plotinus, he associates these statues with the manifestation of beauty in the physical world, seeing that beauty not as something exclusively 'aesthetic' but as the radiance of divine splendour. If names are *agalmata*, images of the same kind as statues of the divine, then language, the medium used by poets and prose-writers, can also, if rightly understood, convey that splendour. If Phidias' statues of Athena and Zeus reflect the descriptions of those gods in the inspired poetry of Homer, that is because the highest kind of poetry conveys philosophical truths in symbolic form.

## 14.4. MUSIC

In some ways Proclus' view of music runs closely parallel to his view of poetry, but when we look more closely we can see that some musical concepts play a fundamental role in the metaphysical structure of Proclus' universe and that the distinction between aesthetics and metaphysics is even harder to draw here. Like other ancient writers, when Proclus uses the Greek word *μουσική* (*mousikê*) he does not always mean what we mean by 'music'. We can see how broad his conception of music is if we consider a passage from the fifth essay of the *Republic* commentary. In this essay, at *in Remp.* I 56.20–60.13, Proclus' 'early' account of inspired poetry as having an educational function is embedded in a classification of four types of *mousikê*. The first two of these are not music as we would understand it, but philosophy<sup>17</sup> and inspired poetry, while the third and fourth do involve music in our sense of the word.

Proclus describes someone who deals with the third kind of music as a lover (like the lover of beauty in Plato's *Symposium*), who goes from perceptible harmonies to imperceptible ones which cannot be heard but are accessible to the mind. However, just as the lover is reminded of beauty by means of sight, so this *mousikos* is reminded of it by means of hearing—i.e. he starts in the sensible world, listening to the sounds of audible music, and then progresses to an understanding of the harmonic structures which generate such sounds.

This 'Pythagorean' kind of music,<sup>18</sup> conceived as a mathematical science which reveals the structure of the universe, is discussed at much greater length in the *Timaeus* commentary.<sup>19</sup> There consideration of *Timaeus* 35b–36b, in which the demiurge is described as dividing the World Soul according to a complex numerical series which constitutes a musical scale, leads Proclus to an extended discussion of the musical scale as symbolizing cosmic harmony.<sup>20</sup> For Proclus such symbolism is neither arbitrary nor subjective. In coming to understand it we come to understand the objective structure of reality. Listening to music, for those whose ears and mind are attuned to its underlying mathematical structures, is thus not some kind of minor leisure activity but a very important way for individual souls to engage with the universe of which they are a part and the higher realities from which they derive.

Already in the Pythagorean tradition music was regarded not only as reflecting the mathematical structure of reality but also as having a powerful educational and therapeutic role. The story found in the Alexandrian Neoplatonist Olympiodorus, of how Pythagoras used music to cure a young man of erotic passion, is only one of a number of similar stories, reflecting a tradition which goes back at least to Plutarch.<sup>21</sup> The fourth type of *mousikê* in Proclus' *Republic* commentary is the music which educates the passions:

Finally, he [i.e. Plato] talks about yet another kind of music (*μουσική*) in addition to these, one which educates the character by means of modes and rhythms which

lead to virtue, discovering which modes and rhythms can educate the passions of the soul and mould them with excellent character traits in all actions and circumstances, and which ones, opposite to these, put souls out of tune by tightening or loosening them and leading them to disharmony and lack of rhythm. (*in Remp.* I 59.20–7; my tr.)

Proclus regards this type of music, not unreasonably, as the type discussed by Plato in *Republic* III. Its close connection with the kind of music which reflects cosmic harmony is evident in the way in which Proclus in the following sentence of the essay links together *Resp.* II 376e, on *mousikê* as education for the soul, and *Resp.* VII 530e–531c, on the parallels between the structure of music and the mathematical harmony of the universe revealed by the study of astronomy.

The next section of Proclus' fifth essay, *in Remp.* I 60.14–63.15, is also concerned with the educational role of music. Here Proclus is discussing *Resp.* III 398c–400 and responding to the criticisms of that passage made by Aristotle in *Politics* VIII 7, 1342a28–b17. He argues that while the Dorian mode is suitable for education, the Phrygian, criticized by Aristotle as orgiastic, is appropriate to rites and 'occasions of inspiration' (*entheasmoi*). Similarly he agrees here with both Plato and Aristotle in rejecting the *aulos* as unsuitable for education, on the grounds of its versatility (*poikilia*), but in the *Alcibiades* commentary (198.6–7) he notes that this instrument can be useful in the mysteries. These passages suggest that Proclus had a concept of inspired music, comparable to the concept of inspired poetry found in the sixth essay of the *Republic* commentary.<sup>22</sup> Such a concept would make room for the role of music in theurgic and other rites, as a way of uniting the soul with the divine. Just as, for Proclus, theurgy, in my view, complements philosophical understanding rather than superseding it, so, I suggest, responding emotionally to inspired, ritual music would complement symbolic understanding of the mathematical structure of music, rather than replace it.

#### 14.5. BEAUTY

We have seen that the third type of *mousikê* in the *Republic* commentary is that of the 'lover of beauty' (*philokalos*) and that the passage about Phidias' Zeus in the *Timaeus* commentary mentions 'beauty, or the lack of it' as coming 'to the image from the model'. As I noted at the beginning of this chapter, in Plato's discussion of beauty, *to kalon*, is largely distinct from discussion of what we call the arts. Of course the Greek adjective *kalos* (καλός) has a wider range of reference than the English 'beautiful', being used in moral as well as aesthetic contexts, as a very general term of



commendation, often more readily translated by 'fine' than by 'beautiful'. Nevertheless, Plato in the *Symposium*, by associating love (*erôs*) with desire for *to kalon*, emphasized the way in which *to kalon* can be used to refer to the beauty of what is seen in what we would call an 'aesthetic' sense. At the same time, he laid the foundations for the crucial role assigned to beauty by Plotinus and other Neoplatonists as that which awakens us to an awareness of an intelligible world beyond the realm of sense-perception. Beauty plays very much this role in *Phaedrus* 249d–252c, another very important text for the Neoplatonists, and we too easily forget that in *Resp.* III 401c–d, after all the notoriously harsh criticism of Homer and tragedy as unsuitable for the education of those who are to be the guardians of the ideal state, Plato suggests that the craftsmen in the ideal state should produce only works which are *kala* so that the young guardians see and hear only what will 'lead them imperceptibly, from earliest childhood, into affinity, friendship and harmony with beauty of speech and thought (*καλὸς λόγος*)' (*Resp.* III 401d; tr. Griffith). Finally, *Tim.* 28a–29b, on the ordered beauty of the world, a text not regularly considered in modern discussions of Plato's view of beauty, was enormously influential in antiquity.

Plotinus' allusion to Phidias' Zeus in *Enn.* V 8 [31] 1 is part of his discussion of intelligible beauty, while *Enn.* I 6 [1], Plotinus' best-known treatment of beauty, is structured according to the ascent to the Form of Beauty in the *Symposium* and also alludes extensively to the *Phaedrus*. Proclus takes for granted the view, which goes back to the *Timaeus* and reappears in Plotinus and other Neoplatonists, that the physical world is an image of the intelligible. As a good Platonist, he understands that the image is always inferior to its archetype, but also that the image can remind us of the archetype and that such perceptible reminders have value so long as we recognize them for what they are and do not let ourselves be seduced into concentrating on the physical alone.<sup>23</sup> It should not surprise us that his *Timaeus* commentary contains quite a number of passages developing the theme of the beauty of the world. In some of these he links his exposition of the *Timaeus* to other Platonic texts on beauty, in a manner characteristic of his method of 'expounding Plato from Plato'.<sup>24</sup> For example, at *in Tim.* I 71.4–5 he refers to 'those who have a memory of intelligible beauty and so welcome the beauty which appears [in the physical world]', alluding to *Phdr.* 250c–251c, while at *in Tim.* II 110.22–5 his remarks on *Tim.* 34b contain strong echoes of the *Symposium*, as interpreted by Plotinus.<sup>25</sup>

*Tim.* 29a prompts Proclus to a lengthy disquisition on the beauty of the world (*in Tim.* I 330.20–334.27) which contains a number of points of particular interest. *In Tim.* I 330.31–331.7 compares the role of the Demiurge in fashioning the world as an image of its intelligible paradigm with the activity of those who make statues (*agalmata*) for ritual purposes. Proclus here contrasts statues which show relatively weak signs of the divine presence

with others which more clearly participate in the highest divine powers, implying that the latter are better made. It is to the latter that he compares the world, which is the 'most beautiful' (*kallistos*) image of its lofty divine paradigm. A couple of pages further on, at I 333.2–6 Proclus links the beauty of the world to Hephaestus' role in Greek mythology and poetry as the husband of Aphrodite, the goddess of beauty.<sup>26</sup> It is also worth noting that twice in these pages Proclus uses the rare word *kallonê* (*καλλονή*) used by Plotinus in *Enn.* I 6 [1] 6 of the very highest Beauty which is at the same level as the Good. The word recurs at *in Tim.* I 433.31–434.5 where Proclus offers an exegesis of the Orphic god Phanes as 'filled with hidden and ineffable Beauty'.<sup>27</sup> For Proclus, statues of the gods, stories about the traditional gods told by the poets, and the descriptions of strange gods found in Orphic poetry are all to be interpreted in the same way. All reveal the beauty which is to be found not only in the physical world but also in religious rites, in poetic myths, and in music.<sup>28</sup>

#### 14.6. AESTHETICS OR METAPHYSICS?

Proclus' talk of beauty in the *Timaeus* commentary is all set within an explicitly metaphysical context. We have seen that for him the highest kind of poetry is inspired poetry which offers symbolic representation of divine truths, that statues of the gods are objects of worship, and that music offers an understanding of the structure of the universe and can unite the soul with the divine. It might be argued that Proclus in fact has no aesthetics, no theory of literature or any other art, only an all-embracing metaphysics into which every aspect of human life is fitted and that we are the ones who persist in pulling out particular passages from his work and treating them as discussions of issues in literary theory or aesthetics. In some sense this is true, just as it is also true that Plato has no distinct aesthetics and no specific theory of literature or any other art. Nevertheless, just as Plato's discussions of literature, art, and beauty raise many issues which we now think of as issues in aesthetics, so too Proclus and other Neoplatonists offer theories, suggestions, and assumptions which are relevant to aesthetic theory. Central to what we, rightly or wrongly, regard as Proclus' aesthetics is the Platonist view that the world in which we live is only a representation of a higher, intelligible world—and that such a representation is not a simple copy but a complex artefact which must be interpreted as an ordered system of symbols. The world requires allegorical interpretation, just as much as Homer's poems or Plato's myths. The Neoplatonists themselves, prompted in part by the analogy between a well-constructed speech and a living creature in Plato's *Phaedrus* (264c), draw a striking analogy between the world (which according to the *Timaeus* is itself a

living creature) and a book, specifically a Platonic dialogue. The analogy appears particularly clearly in §§ 15–17 of the *Anonymous Prolegomena to the Philosophy of Plato*, a short work probably written in sixth-century Alexandria and clearly influenced by Proclus and his school, but it is already evident in passages of Proclus such as *in Alc.* 10.4–16.<sup>29</sup> Modern interpreters have been interested in this analogy as adumbrating an organic theory of literature, but its interest lies just as much in what it tells us about the Neoplatonists' way of looking at the world. We may find attractive the idea that a book, be it a Platonic dialogue, an epic poem, or, in modern times, a complex novel, presents us with 'a whole world' of imaginative creation, but for the Neoplatonists, including Proclus, it is more important that the world—the real world in which we live, not the fictitious world of literature—can be read like a book. 'To see a world in a grain of sand', as William Blake put it,<sup>30</sup> one needs not only to accept a Platonist metaphysics—or at least to suspend disbelief in such a metaphysics—but to be willing to 'read' signs and symbols everywhere, in the physical world, in the temples of the gods, in poetry, and in music.

If the world can be read like a book, then the Demiurge who, according to the Neoplatonists, makes the world and inserts theurgic symbols within it is like an author who produces a text which can be interpreted allegorically. Proclus uses the language of the *Chaldaean Oracles* and theurgy to develop an analogy between cosmology and writing in *Theol. plat.* I 5, 23.22–24.11. He declares that the truth about the gods permeates Plato's work, rousing those who are capable of it to recollection of the immaterial and transcendent nature of the gods, and compares Plato's inspired composition of his dialogues with the way in which the Demiurge has placed images of the unknowable existence of the gods throughout the world so that everything can revert to the divine to which it is akin. Similarly at *Theol. plat.* I 29, 124.12–125.2, Proclus compares the activity of the Demiurge who produces copies of the Forms in matter both with the activity of our intellect in producing likenesses 'in words' (*dia logou*) of other things, including the gods themselves, and with the way in which statues can be animated using theurgic symbols.<sup>31</sup>

#### 14.7. CONCLUSION

I should like to conclude by drawing attention to two texts by Proclus in which many of the themes of this chapter come together. The first comes from the *Timaeus* commentary. In *in Tim.* I 60.1–16 Proclus is discussing *Tim.* 19b–c in which Socrates talks of developing the account of the ideal state given in the *Republic*. He compares his desire to extend the story he had told in the earlier dialogue to that of someone who, having looked at beautiful animals which are

not moving, either because they are in a painting or because they are real but at rest, wants to set them in movement. This passage of Plato offers Proclus an excellent opportunity to expand on the idea that the ideal state has been described according to its likeness to the divine (*kath'homoiôsin tôn theiôn*). Using the language of 'rhetorical' literary criticism discussed in the first section of this chapter, he praises the grace (*charis*) of the language Plato uses in the *Republic*, saying that it is an image (*eikôn*) of the grace which the Demiurge bestows on the heavenly bodies. He also praises the skilfulness of its style (*to technikon tês hermêneias*), which, mixed with natural talent (*to autophues*), represents divine creation. He naturally draws attention to Plato's use of the adjective *kalos*, 'beautiful', to describe the animals that are to be set in motion, and glosses this in a typically Neoplatonic manner as *tôi kallei prolamponta*, 'shining with beauty', i.e. exhibiting beauty which comes from a higher realm than that of sense-perception.<sup>32</sup> Finally, his comment on Plato's reference to animals either in a painting or really alive is that bodily images (*eikones*) are copies (*mimēmata*) which display the real life that is prior to them, just as the statues of the gods are images (*agalmata*) of the life within them. Here then Proclus combines what we would regard as 'literary critical' comment on Plato's writing in the *Republic* with the belief that Plato's skill as a writer is parallel to the skill of the Demiurge in making the world, while also alluding to the Neoplatonist view of beauty and to his religious understanding of statues of the gods.

The second text which brings together a number of the themes I have discussed comes from Proclus' *Hymn to the Muses*—the goddesses in charge of *mousikê*, in the sense of both music and poetry.

We hymn, we hymn the light that raises man aloft,  
on the nine daughters of great Zeus with splendid voices,  
who have rescued . . .  
the souls who were wandering in the depth of life,  
through immaculate rites from intellect-awaking books,  
and have taught them to strive eagerly to follow the track leading  
beyond the deep gulf of forgetfulness . . .  
That the race of men without fear for the gods may not lead me  
astray from the most divine and brilliant path with its splendid fruit;  
Always draw my all-roving soul towards the holy light, away from  
the hubbub of the much wandering race . . .

(*Hymni* III.1–4, 6–7, 12–15; tr. Van den Berg)<sup>33</sup>

Here Proclus praises the Muses as drawing human souls by their voices, by religious rites, and by the right kind of books away from the hubbub of daily life towards the light of the intelligible world. Such praise places a high value on what we would call aesthetic experience, but that value comes from regarding this experience as having religious and metaphysical significance. Like Plato, Proclus does not want us to dwell on the surface appearance of art; like Plotinus

he does not value perceptible beauty for its own sake; instead, his concern is with the power of both art and beauty to make us look beyond the surface and beyond sense-perception. That is why he is interested in inspired poetry, in statues of the gods, and in music that reveals mathematical and metaphysical structures. He lives in a world charged with symbolic meaning, a world which has to be ‘read’ and interpreted in accordance with his Platonist philosophy.

## NOTES

1. See Walsdorff (1927: 101–2) and Sheppard (1980: 86).
2. See Marinus, *V. Proc.* § 8 and Felten (1913: pp. xxi–xxvi). Cf. also Ch. 1 in this volume.
3. For more detail on this see Walsdorff (1927: ch. IV.9) and Sheppard (1980: 117–19, 124–9). Cf. also Steel (2005a).
4. See further Sheppard (2008: pp. ix–xv; 2014a: 19–46).
5. See e.g. Russell (1981: 66–7); Trimpi (1983: 200–19); Whitman (1987: 96–8); Bernard (1990: 35–50, 79–90, 96–102).
6. See Sheppard (1980: 18–21). My suggestion in Sheppard (1980: 18) that in the fifth essay of the *in Remp.* poetry belongs under either the second or the fourth type of *mousikê* now seems to me to be wrong. Inspired poetry is discussed under the second type, while uninspired poetry is mentioned only at I 60.8, almost as an afterthought.
7. For an English translation of the first part of Proclus’ account of the three types of poetry, *in Remp.* I 177.7–179.32, see Bychkov and Sheppard (2010: 236–8). For a complete English translation of the fifth and sixth essays of the *Republic* commentary, see Lamberton (2012). For discussion of the theory, see Sheppard (1980: 162–202); Lamberton (1986: 188–97); Kuisma (1996: 122–34); Struck (2004: 227–53); cf. also Rangos (1999).
8. Patrizia Marzillo in the introduction to her edn of Proclus, *in Hes.* argues that Proclus also regarded Hesiod’s *Works and Days* as inspired poetry. However, I agree with Van den Berg (2014b) that Proclus’ *Commentary on the Works and Days* suggests that he regarded this work as belonging to the second of the three kinds of poetry described in the sixth essay, the kind which offers moral advice. Cf. also Faraggiana di Sarzana (1987).
9. For discussion of this passage, see Ch. 10 in this volume.
10. See Plato, *Resp.* X 607a and Van den Berg (2001: 86–140). For a rather different view of Proclus’ hymns, cf. Ch. 1 in this volume.
11. See Sheppard (2014b).
12. See Cic., *Orat.* 2.8–3.10; Sen., *Ep.* 65.7 and Theiler (1930: 15–55). For the influence of these ideas on Renaissance art, see Panofsky (1968).
13. For the place of the intellective Zeus in Proclus’ system, see the schema in Appendix I.
14. I am grateful to Carlos Steel for drawing my attention to this passage.
15. See Hirschle (1979); Van den Berg (2008: 139–42).

16. On the details of this passage, see Sheppard (1987: 148–9) and Van den Berg (2008: 106–9).
17. Cf. Plato, *Phd.* 61a.
18. Cf. O'Meara (2005b); Sheppard (2005).
19. Cf. Chs 6 and 8 in this volume.
20. For a full discussion see Moro Tornese (2011).
21. See Ol., in *Gorg.* 41.1–20, with the comments of O'Meara (2005b: 140–1) and Sheppard (2005: 150–1).
22. At in *Remp.* I 62.6–9 Proclus refers to *Minos* 318b on the music of Olympus 'the Phrygian' as another Platonic text on inspired music, in accordance with the usual Neoplatonist acceptance of the *Minos* as genuinely Platonic. The allusion to the same text in Iamblichus *De myst.* III 9 suggests that Proclus, as so often, is building on a tradition of interpretation here (although Iamblichus rejects the connection between music and inspiration).
23. *Theol. plat.* I 22, 101.20–3 describes the *φαινόμενον καλόν* as 'sterile and ineffect-ive' (*ἀγονον... καὶ ἀνεύργητον*), presumably when we fail to let it remind us of higher beauty. I am grateful to Carlos Steel for drawing my attention to this passage.
24. See Sheppard (2014b).
25. Cf. Baltzly (2009b: 67 n. 23).
26. For Proclus, Hephaestus was the demiurge of the sensible world. See Sheppard (1980: 68) and the texts cited there.
27. On this passage cf. Hoffmann (2012a: 308–9 n. 150). Proclus also uses the word at *Theol. plat.* I 24, 106.8; III 22, 81.15; in *Remp.* I 72.15; 295.22; and in *Tim.* III 44.25 (on which cf. Hoffmann 2012b: 183–6). For the place of Phanes in Proclus' system, see the schema in Appendix I.
28. For discussion of Proclus' view of the beauty of mathematics, in the *in Eucl.*, see Martijn (2009) and Nikulin (2009). Cf. also Terezis and Polychronopoulou (2002). Proclus' account of intelligible and even higher beauty can be found in the *Theol. plat.*—see I 24; III 11; and III 22. I am grateful to Philippe Hoffmann, Gerd van Riel, and Carlos Steel for pointing me in the direction of these passages.
29. For the likely date and provenance of Anon. *Proleg.* see Westerink's introduction to Anon. *Proleg.* (1990). For discussion of the analogy as it appears in Anon. *Proleg.* see Coulter (1976: 95–103) and Brisson (1987b). The related comparison between divination and reading goes back at least to Plutarch: see Plut., *De gen. Socr.* 582a–b and cf. Plot., *Enn.* II 3 [52] 7; III 1 [3] 6; Porph., *Abst.* II 41.4; Synesius, *De insomniis* 132a. I am grateful to Donald Russell for most of these references to reading as divination.
30. The late Prof. A. C. Lloyd long ago drew my attention to the first line of Blake's poem, 'Auguries of Innocence' as encapsulating the Neoplatonic way of looking at the world.
31. Cf. Gersh (2000: 26–7).
32. Tarrant's translation (2007: 154) 'that outshine others in beauty' implies a different and, I think, mistaken interpretation.
33. Cf. Moro Tornese (2011: 180).

## Proclus' Legacy

*Peter Adamson and Filip Karfik*

The price that philosophers pay for being influential is that they cannot control their influence. Proclus is a case in point. Few ancient philosophers were more enthusiastically received in the centuries after their death. But Proclus would probably have been dismayed at the way he was received. For one thing, very little of his massive corpus—with its masterful Platonic commentaries and philosophical explorations of traditional Greek theology—received any attention at all. Until the renewed interest in Proclus in the thirteenth century, Proclus' legacy rested primarily on the *Elements of Theology*, though we see occasional engagements with the *Tria opuscula* and *On the Eternity of the World*. The relative brevity and user-friendliness of these works no doubt explains their prominence in the reception of Proclus. Another factor is that these works were of interest to Christians, who were chiefly responsible for reinterpreting, transmitting, and engaging with them. Proclus was staunchly religious, and in all of his writings sought a deeper understanding of the traditional Greek divinities from a philosophical point of view. It would surely have struck him as ironic, if not deeply depressing, that the story of his legacy is primarily the story of Christian appropriations of his thought.

This process began surprisingly quickly, in the generations immediately following Proclus' death. We find a broadly positive reception of Proclus in the pagan Damascius and a critical reception in the Christian commentator John Philoponus. But in the early sixth century, Proclus' ideas were already being woven into the fabric of Christianity by an anonymous author we call the Pseudo-Dionysius. This was not so much an engagement with a single work by Proclus, as a wholesale fusion of Proclus' philosophy with biblical exegesis. The later Byzantine reception of Proclus did involve engagements with specific treatises by Proclus, especially the *Elements*, a work whose wide dispersion is shown by the existence of a surviving Georgian translation (see Gunther 2007). The same text also dominated the reception of Proclus in the Islamic world, where an anonymous (but again, probably Christian) translator

rendered the *Elements* into Arabic. A version of this translation, in Arabic called the *Kalām fī maḥd al-ḥayr* (Discourse on the Pure Good), was then translated into Latin as the famous *Liber de Causis* (Book of Causes).

This translation, and the notorious misattribution of the work to Aristotle, led to a rebirth of interest in Proclus among medieval Christian philosophers. It is worth noting that the esteem given to the *Book of Causes* survived the discovery that it derived ultimately from the *Elements* of Proclus—a discovery announced by no less a figure than St Thomas Aquinas. Aquinas was only one of numerous philosophers in the scholastic tradition to comment upon the *de Causis*. Once the *Elements* was available in Latin, it too became an inspiration and subject for commentary among medieval Christian authors in Europe. This was a premonition of the enthusiasm shown towards Proclus by Renaissance thinkers, notably Marsilio Ficino. Slowly, we then see more works of Proclus receiving attention. In the sixteenth century, there were editions of numerous Proclean works, from his *Elements of Physics* (already translated into Latin in the twelfth century) and commentaries on the *Republic* and *Timaeus*, to the *Outline of Astronomical Hypotheses*, which was also translated into Latin at this stage. The fifteenth and sixteenth centuries also saw significant thinkers such as Nicholas of Cusa and Marsilio Ficino reading and reacting to Proclus. In a significant difference from the medieval reception, the early modern period saw Proclus exerting influence on the exact sciences, especially thanks to his *Commentary on Euclid's Elements*. Finally, nineteenth-century philosophy featured a renewed embrace of the more metaphysical side of his thought, in German Idealism and by the self-styled Platonist Thomas Taylor, who produced English translations of Proclus' works.

Obviously, the legacy of Proclus is too vast to be considered here in detail. What follows is rather an overview which lingers over some highlights in the tradition. The first half of the paper, by Peter Adamson, considers the reception of Proclus in Greek, Latin, and Arabic up to the early fourteenth century. Filip Karfík then takes up the story and traces Proclus' influence down through German Idealism.<sup>1</sup>

## 15.1. LATER ANTIQUITY AND THE MEDIEVAL PERIOD

### 15.1.1. The Greek Reception

When Proclus died in AD 485, traditional Greek religion was embattled, yet not a spent force. Representatives of this belief system like Damascius (d. 538) were still able to carry on and challenge Proclus' ideas. Meanwhile, as just noted, two contrasting engagements with Proclus in the century following his death were the work of Christians. John Philoponus (c.490–570) wrote a



massive refutation of Proclus' concise set of eighteen arguments *On the Eternity of the World*; it is, indeed, only because of the quotations in Philoponus' *Against Proclus* that we possess the eighteen arguments. (We likewise know Philoponus' *Against Aristotle* primarily because Simplicius quotes it in order to refute it.) Very different was the way that the Pseudo-Dionysius used Proclus. He was the first, and most influential, author to show how the Neoplatonism of the Platonic successor could serve as an inspiration for Christian philosophy.

Perhaps the only philosopher to respond to Proclus in the spirit Proclus himself would have intended was Damascius. He was trained under Horapollon in Alexandria, but moved to Athens when the situation in Alexandria became unfriendly to pagan thinkers.<sup>2</sup> There he was the last head of the Athenian Platonic Academy, still in post when it was closed on the order of the emperor Justinian in 529. Damascius' philosophy remains fundamentally within the paradigm of Syrianus and Proclus: he posits a complex metaphysical hierarchy with triadic structures, relates this hierarchy to the divinities of traditional Greek religion, and engages in commentary on the dialogues of Plato. One overview of his relation to Proclus has put it well by saying, 'without Proclus, Damascius is inconceivable'.<sup>3</sup> Nonetheless, Damascius parts company with Proclus on several fundamental issues, including the nature of the soul<sup>4</sup> and the relationship between being and unity. Regarding the latter, he sees being as inextricably linked to unity at the level of the 'unified'. As a result, oneness and being jointly supervene on a 'material' aspect of each lower principle (see Van Riel 2011: 205). On other topics too, he strikes off on his own, developing innovative ideas about time and pleasure.<sup>5</sup>

But Damascius' most well-known divergence from Proclus occurs at the highest levels of the Neoplatonic system. He radicalizes Proclus' doctrine of the First's transcendence by positing an absolutely ineffable principle above the One, even though the One too is said to be unknowable (see Dillon 1996). Neither the Ineffable nor this One causes things to proceed from it, as this would compromise their transcendence. Rather, Damascius draws on the Iamblican and Proclean idea of self-constituting entities to hold that a principle of differentiated unity can arise without direct causation on the part of the Ineffable or undifferentiated One.<sup>6</sup> This is a particularly interesting move in light of the later reception of Proclus. As we will see, later thinkers within the Islamic and Christian traditions take the reverse approach, and make the First Principle a Creator, that is, a direct cause of being.

For a far more critical reaction to Proclus, we can turn to Philoponus (d. c.570).<sup>7</sup> Though it is fair to assume that his refutation of Proclus' arguments on the world's eternity was motivated in part by his Christianity, we should note that Philoponus mostly chooses to fight Proclus on the ground of Platonic exegesis.<sup>8</sup> Philoponus declares that his allegiance is to the truth and not Plato—with characteristic impertinence, he lists a number of topics on

which Plato did err. But he wants to show that, on the topic of eternity, Plato was right to have the title character of the *Timaeus* say that the cosmos is generated from a beginning (*archê*). In his *Timaeus* commentary, Proclus understood this to refer to a causal, not temporal, principle, but Philoponus is having none of this. He insists that the passage should be read as committing Plato to a temporal beginning for the universe. In *Against Proclus*, he quotes and refutes each of Proclus' arguments for eternity. For instance, in reacting to Proclus' second argument that the world is caused by eternal paradigms, and thus must be eternal, Philoponus points out that Forms cannot *essentially* be paradigms, since otherwise they would depend on particulars for their survival. He also develops an innovative new conception of matter as three-dimensional extension, in combating Proclus' Aristotelian-style argument that matter must be eternal.<sup>9</sup>

The scholarly consensus is that Philoponus was a younger contemporary of another author who engaged significantly with Proclus. This author produced four treatises and a series of epistles, in all of which he adopts the persona of Dionysius.<sup>10</sup> The allusion is to the biblical Book of Acts, where Dionysius is the name of a man from Athens converted by St Paul to the Christian faith. The author claims to have witnessed events of the apostolic era, notably the eclipse that occurred during the crucifixion, and even addresses one of his letters to the apostle John. He seems, however, to have produced the corpus around AD 500; other writers are already referring to the corpus around 520. His dependence on Proclus was securely established in 1895 by two scholars (H. Koch and J. Stiglmayr) who independently noticed parallels between Dionysius and Proclus, notably between the discussion of evil in the Dionysian *Divine Names* and the treatment of that subject in the *Tria opuscula*. But this connection had not gone unnoticed previously. In fact, an anonymous scholiast, identified by some scholars as none other than Philoponus,<sup>11</sup> claims that it was Proclus who plagiarized from Dionysius rather than the other way around! More generally, the apostolic authority of Dionysius was defended by John of Scythopolis (d. c.548), who wrote a prologue and *scholia* on the corpus, and by Maximus the Confessor (d. 662).

A reader alert to the possibility of Proclean borrowings in Pseudo-Dionysius will have little trouble detecting them upon reading the corpus. Perhaps most obvious are the aforementioned parallels between their treatments of evil, and the fact that Dionysius borrows Proclus' triadic scheme in his account of the angelic hierarchy. Incidentally, the word *hierarchia* first appears in Greek in the works of Dionysius—we are unwittingly borrowing his terminology every time we describe Neoplatonic ontology as 'hierarchical'. So it is only fair that Dionysius frequently borrows terminology from Proclus (Saffrey 1982). He occasionally distances himself from such language, for instance by adding the phrase 'so to speak' when alluding to the notion of *sumpatheia* (*Divine Names*, 648B) (Rorem 1993: 141–2). But the intellectual

indebtedness is not merely a matter of terminology. For instance, Dionysius borrows the idea of creating 'through being alone' (693B–C) and uses the fundamental idea of procession and reversion throughout his corpus. Most strikingly, Dionysius refers to an esteemed teacher named Hierotheus, who wrote a work called, of all things, the *Elements of Theology* (648A, C, 681A) (see Sheldon-Williams 1966).

Since the modern discovery of the use of Proclus in the Dionysian corpus, scholars have variously emphasized either the Neoplatonic or the Christian intentions of the anonymous author. But, as has recently and rightly been pointed out, this is a false dichotomy. 'Dionysius' seems to have believed that Neoplatonist ideas about transcendence were in harmony with what he could read in St Paul.<sup>12</sup> Indeed, he seems to have found Proclus' approach to divine ineffability broadly satisfactory. For instance, he adopts Proclus' 'double negation' policy in divine discourse, often expressed by the prefix *huper-*.<sup>13</sup> As a Christian, Dionysius does not pursue the sort of proposal we find in Damascius, who separates out the truly ineffable as a further divine principle above the (already unknowable) One.<sup>14</sup> One might expect Christian Trinitarian commitments to be a problem in Dionysius' rapprochement between Pauline Christianity and Proclus' Neoplatonism. But, while Dionysius does of course accept the Trinity of persons, he mostly sets this issue aside in the *Divine Names*, insisting that the epithets he will discuss apply to all three Persons, since the entire Godhead is a source of being, life, wisdom, and so on (644A). In Dionysius, then, we have a late ancient foreshadowing of a common medieval pattern for the appropriation of Proclus. His philosophical theology is applied to God as a Creator, without much thought given to tensions between Proclus' rigorous henology and the doctrine of the Trinity.

The aforementioned idea proposed by the anonymous scholiast, that Proclus was a disciple of the Pseudo-Dionysius, appears again in the Byzantine tradition, in a hostile commentary on the *Elements of Theology* (of Proclus!) by Nicholas of Methone (d. in the 1160s).<sup>15</sup> Greek-speaking Byzantine scholars were far better acquainted with Proclus than their contemporaries who worked in Arabic and Latin. Indeed, we must thank Byzantine copyists for preserving the works of Proclus that we are able to read today. Yet the *Elements*, the text with the greatest impact in Latin and Arabic, was likewise the occasion for Nicholas' commentary. He may have been provoked by a wave of admiration for Proclus in the previous century, particularly in Michael Psellus (d. after 1081) and his student John Italus (d. after 1082). Both of these authors refer extensively to Proclus, especially to the *Elements*, the *Tria opuscula*, and the commentaries on the *Timaeus* and *Chaldaean Oracles*. Indeed, Psellus praised Proclus as being 'at the pinnacle of all science and wisdom' and depended on Proclus' commentary in his own work on the *Chaldaean Oracles*.<sup>16</sup> However, it seems that Nicholas was not justified in

bemoaning, at the beginning of his refutation, a dangerous enthusiasm for Proclus in his own day.<sup>17</sup>

Nicholas found Proclus dangerous because of the incompatibility of Proclus' metaphysics with Christian doctrine. Given that Proclus' philosophy is deeply integrated with traditional Greek polytheism, this may strike us as an obvious problem. Yet Proclus' works were embraced by some monotheists in the Greek tradition, from Dionysius to Psellus and beyond.<sup>18</sup> Nicholas could not deny the resonances between Dionysius and Proclus, but he responded by portraying the latter as a confused follower of the former. He opposed Proclus not so much out of a general hostility to pagan polytheism, but because of Proclus' views on specific issues. Proclus makes his First Principle an utter unity, whereas Christian doctrine sees God as a Trinity. Proclus holds that the world is eternal, not created. And, in a point that does relate to polytheism, Proclus accepts a multiplicity of immaterial causal principles, whereas Nicholas wants to restrict the capacity for creation to God alone. Thus he argues that we should not separate participated causes from unparticipated causes, but see God as being in a way participated (indirectly, through His effects) and in a way unparticipated.<sup>19</sup>

### 15.1.2. The Arabic Reception

Nicholas of Methone represents one possible reaction to the *Elements* from a monotheistic perspective: that of rejection and critique. Another way of dealing with the text was to revise it to such an extent that it became philosophically and theologically acceptable. This was the strategy employed by those who introduced Proclus' *Elements* into Arabic. The work was at least partially translated in the ninth century, within the context of a circle of Christian translators gathered around the Muslim philosopher al-Kindī (d. after 870). We are not certain of the identity of the translator, though Ibn al-Bīṭrīq has been put forward as an educated guess. The productions of the Kindī circle are unified by stylistic features as well as philosophical characteristics, as was first established in a ground-breaking study of the Arabic Proclus by Gerhard Endress (1973).

The texts examined by Endress are only one witness for the Arabic tradition of the *Elements*. Another version, with a vast historical influence, is titled *Discourse on the Pure Good*. Translated into Latin by Gerard of Cremona in the latter half of the twelfth century, this version of the *Elements* would become, in due course, one of the most powerful vehicles for Proclus' legacy in Christian Europe. It was not as influential in the Arabic tradition, where another Kindī-circle text, based on the *Enneads* of Plotinus, was the preferred source for Neoplatonic ideas.<sup>20</sup> Both the longest of several texts which preserve the Arabic version of Plotinus, and the version of Proclus known as the

*Discourse on the Pure Good*, were incorrectly ascribed to Aristotle.<sup>21</sup> The former, Plotinian text came to be known as the *Theology of Aristotle*, while the misattribution of the *Discourse* to Aristotle later helped to provoke interest in the Latin version, titled *Book of Causes* (*Liber de causis*).<sup>22</sup>

There is no doubt that the *Discourse on the Pure Good*, a.k.a. *Book of Causes*, is based on Proclus: scholars have shown that more than thirty propositions of the *Elements* stand behind the propositions of the Arabic text.<sup>23</sup> However, as with the Arabic version of Plotinus, radical reworkings of Proclus bring his ideas into line with a metaphysics that seems to have been more acceptable to the Kindī circle.<sup>24</sup> Most striking is the fact that these texts present the First Principle not only as the pure One of Plotinus and Proclus, but also as a first cause that ‘creates’—a change that would have made the text appealing to both the Christian and Muslim members of the circle and to later readers who shared these faiths.<sup>25</sup> In another systematic change, the complex metaphysical hierarchy (that word again) of Proclus is assimilated to the simpler Plotinian chain of principles.<sup>26</sup>

Both of these features are present, for instance, in § 8, which reads in part, ‘the First Cause is neither intellect, nor soul, nor nature, but is above intellect, soul and nature; for it is creative (*mubdi‘a*) of all things’.<sup>27</sup> On the other hand, the redactor of the text goes on to say that the First Cause creates ‘through the intermediary (*bi-tawassut*) of intellect’.<sup>28</sup> This is faithful to the Plotinian source that inspires the passage, but might seem to be in tension with Muslim and Christian ideas about creation. In fact, both the Arabic Plotinus and the Arabic Proclus want us to accept that mediated causation may legitimately be described as ‘creation (*ibdā‘*).’ This anticipates the metaphysical doctrines found in thinkers like Avicenna. It is also characteristic of the Kindī circle’s subtle negotiation between revealed religion and Neoplatonism.

Nor is this an isolated example in the *Discourse on the Pure Good*. For instance, § 5, based on *El. theol.* § 123, is an emphatic statement of Proclus’ negative theology. In this case, the proposition is based closely on Proclus, except that the phrase ‘all that is divine (*πάν το θεῖον*)’ is replaced with ‘the first cause (*al-‘illa al-ūlā*)’, emphasizing the primacy and uniqueness of the divine principle.<sup>29</sup> In § 17, based on *Elements* § 102, we have a more radical transformation of Proclus’ metaphysics. Of course, he holds that below the highest One there is a distinct causal principle called ‘the first Being (*τὸ πρῶτως ὄν*)’. The Arabic version conflates this principle of being with the first cause and Creator (‘all things have their being from the First Being (*huwīyya*)... the First Being is at rest, and is the Cause of causes; if it gives all things being, then it gives by means of creation’). This makes the Arabic version of Proclus, especially in its Latin version, the *Book of Causes*, a significant source for the very un-Proclean notion that God is pure being.<sup>30</sup>

Given their philosophical and historical importance, it is unfortunate that the textual history of the Arabic Proclus materials is a complicated and to some extent unresolved one. It has already been noted that, in addition to the Arabic *Vorlage* of the *Book of Causes*, namely the *Discourse on the Pure Good*, there is a further set of propositions, the ones studied by Endress. There is, further, a recently discovered 'new' version of the *Discourse*, which only partly overlaps with the one that was translated into Latin (see Thillet and Oudaimah 2001–2).<sup>31</sup> It has been argued that the two versions of the *Discourse*, along with other evidence, point towards the existence of a lost, original version of the *Discourse*.<sup>32</sup> On this hypothesis, there was first a translation of the *Elements*, which was then reworked as the original *Discourse*. Both of these stages were presumably the work of the Kindī circle. The two extant versions of the *Discourse* would then be shorter redactions of that original adaptation of the Arabic Proclus. Be that as it may, it seems clear that the Kindī circle is responsible for the distinctive philosophical features of the text. Indeed, a leading expert on the text, Cristina D'Ancona, has suggested that al-Kindī himself may be the redactor of the *Discourse*.<sup>33</sup>

In light of this it is not surprising that ideas from the *Discourse* show up in al-Kindī himself, though, in light of the assimilation of Proclus to Plotinus in the *Discourse*, it can be difficult to say when al-Kindī is influenced by which Neoplatonic work. More generally, as already noted, the Arabic Proclus had a lesser impact in the Islamic world than did the Arabic Plotinus. Yet there are exceptions. To note the two most important, the Neoplatonist al-ʿĀmirī (d. 922; not coincidentally, a second-generation student of al-Kindī) produced a further reworking of the *Discourse on the Pure Good*, titled *The Book of Chapters on Divine Subjects* (*Kitāb al-Fuṣūl fī l-Maʿālim al-Ilāhiya*).<sup>34</sup> Al-ʿĀmirī goes further than the Kindī circle, by importing explicitly Islamic themes into the text, for instance, the 'command' of God, and his 'pen', 'tablet', and 'throne'.<sup>35</sup> Three centuries later, the enduring appeal of the Arabic version of Proclus was shown when ʿAbd al-Laṭīf al-Baghdādī (d.1231) epitomized it as a chapter in his work on metaphysics.<sup>36</sup>

### 15.1.3. The Latin Tradition

As already noted, however, the most dramatic impact of this reworking of the *Elements* came in the wake of Gerard of Cremona's Latin translation of the *Discourse*. The success of the text is shown by the large number of Latin manuscripts.<sup>37</sup> In a few of these manuscripts the Latin version correctly renders the Arabic title (*Liber de pura bonitate*), but usually it has its more famous title, the *Liber de Causis* (*Book of Causes*). The work was not only widely copied, but also made the subject of a number of commentaries by leading figures in the thirteenth century and beyond. Commentators on the

work include, for instance, Albert the Great,<sup>38</sup> St Thomas Aquinas,<sup>39</sup> and Siger of Brabant.<sup>40</sup> Of these commentaries, that by Thomas Aquinas looms largest in the story of Proclus' reception, not only because of Thomas' own importance, but also because it was in this commentary that the Pseudo-Aristotelian *Book of Causes* was exposed as a reworking of Proclus' *Elements*.

This was made possible by William of Moerbeke, who translated the *Elements of Theology* itself in 1268.<sup>41</sup> As it happened, both William and Thomas found themselves in Viterbo at the time the translation was accomplished, so that Thomas had the new Latin version hot off the press, so to speak. (Actually, we are told that Thomas encouraged the translation to be made, but it seems more likely that the impetus came from William; see Boese 1985: 48). The parallels between the *Elements* and *Book of Causes* were obvious, and Thomas duly announced the connection in the prologue of his commentary.<sup>42</sup> He did not stop there, but conscientiously noted parallels to the *Elements* throughout the commentary, as well as divergences in the *Book of Causes* from its Proclean source (e.g. at § 2.14). At times, he also uses Proclus to elucidate the meaning of more compressed and difficult passages in the *Book of Causes* (e.g. at § 15.88, on self-reversion; § 28.132–3, on simple substances). More interesting still, Thomas triangulates between these two Proclean sources and a third one—which he does not realize is based on Proclus—namely, the corpus of the Pseudo-Dionysius. In this commentary, then, we see a remarkable meeting of three independent streams of the reception of Proclus: the reinterpretation of Proclus' system at the hands of Dionysius, the reworking of the *Elements* by the Kindī circle that in Latin translation became the *Book of Causes*, and the Latin translation of the *Elements* by William of Moerbeke.<sup>43</sup>

The most important work of the Dionysian corpus, the *Divine Names*, was itself the subject of a commentary by Thomas.<sup>44</sup> In his *Commentary on the Book of Causes* he frequently prefers the explicitly Christian view of Dionysius to the doctrines found in the *Book of Causes* and in the *Elements*. He takes Proclus as a representative of the 'Platonists' more generally and thus as someone whose ideas have been criticized in advance, so to speak, by Aristotle. A central example of this tendency is Thomas' treatment of God as a source of being and other perfections. We saw that in the *Book of Causes*, the First Cause is said to 'create' but does so through the intermediary of intellect. Thomas' comment on one such passage begins by cautioning us against a misinterpretation of the author's intention: 'some, misunderstanding what is said here, supposed that according to the author of this book the intellects are creative of the substance of souls (*quod intelligentiae essent creatrices substantiae animarum*)' (§ 3.22). This interpretation is rejected as 'against the views of the Platonists', who explained the features of things by appealing to participation in causes. Thus, for instance, things would have life by participating in life itself, and intellection is possessed by participation in intellect

itself. These causes would all be separate, so intellect is not the cause of being—it is rather the cause of intellection, and being is always caused 'by the First Cause, which is its own being (*causa prima quae est suum ipsum esse*)' (§ 3.22).

Thomas hastens to point out that this idea of a unique source of being is found in Proclus (he cites *El. theol.* § 18)<sup>45</sup> and that Aristotle too sees the first being as the cause of all other things (citing *Metaphysics* *a* 2). This establishes a point of agreement between Aristotle and the *Book of Causes*: God is the sole cause of being since God is paradigmatically being. Of course, for Proclus, the First Cause is distinct from the principle of being,<sup>46</sup> a point Thomas fails to note here. One might expect Thomas to celebrate the doctrine of the *Book of Causes*: it has adapted Proclus by making the One a creator and the source of being for all things. But Thomas does not want to concede another idea that remains in this adapted version, namely, that other perfections, such as life and intellection, derive from paradigmatic causes subsidiary to the First Cause. He appeals to two preferred authorities in establishing his own view. First he cites Aristotle, who criticizes the idea of Platonic paradigms in the *Metaphysics* (§ 3.23). Second, he turns to none other than Dionysius:

It must be said that [the soul] has intellection from the First Cause, from which it has essence; and this agrees with the view of Dionysius mentioned above, namely that goodness itself, being itself, life itself and wisdom itself are not distinct, but are one and the same: God, from whom things derive their being, living, and intellecting. (§ 3.24)<sup>47</sup>

Happily, Aristotle is also of the same view, since in *Metaphysics* *A* he says that God engages in intellection and is alive.

The revelation that the *Book of Causes* was written by a relatively obscure Platonist, rather than by Aristotle, did not prevent it, and hence Proclus, from exerting continued influence in the later medieval period. Most significant is the engagement with his newly translated works in Germany in the fourteenth century. The impact of Proclus in this milieu can be divided into two phases. First, there is a continued reception of the *Book of Causes* and its source, the *Elements*. This is to be found in Heinrich Bate, Theodore of Freiberg, and the more famous Meister Eckhart. What has been called the 'most mature phase' of Proclus' reception in Germany is marked especially by Berthold of Moosburg's *Commentary on the Elements*.<sup>48</sup> Berthold was active in Regensburg (1327–35) and then Cologne (1335–61), the centre of engagements with Proclus in Germany. Berthold integrates Proclus into the 'German mysticism' pioneered by Dietrich of Freiberg, drawing not only on the *Elements* but also on the *Tria opuscula*, likewise translated by William of Moerbeke (along with the *Parmenides* commentary).<sup>49</sup>

In this German tradition, Proclus continues to be read in the light of the Pseudo-Dionysius—making this something of a *leitmotif* for the entire first millennium of Proclus' reception.<sup>50</sup> Eckhart welcomes the emphasis on



negative theology in the *Book of Causes*, particularly in proposition 5 of the Latin version: *causa prima est super omne nomen quo nominatur* ('the First Cause is above any name by which it [might be] called'; see Beierwaltes 1992a: 164). The German tradition connects this apophatic tendency in the Proclus materials to Dionysian negative theology. This leads to an anti-Thomistic position which restores the original Proclean (and of course more generally Neoplatonic) claim that God is beyond being. The First Cause may be identified with One or the Good, as in the *Elements*, but being is associated with creatures rather than creator.<sup>51</sup> The parallel claim that the First transcends intellect also fits well into Dionysian theology since it implies that thought cannot grasp God (Sturlese 1986: 153). Berthold enthusiastically accepts all these consequences, concluding that man's relationship with God must culminate in mystical union with the divine, rather than in knowledge of being itself.

#### 15.1.4. Concluding Reflections on the Medieval Reception

It is worth pausing here to look back over the reception of Proclus in Greek, Latin, and Arabic up to the fourteenth century. Several themes have emerged. We have already noted that Proclus' *Elements* was dominant in this reception. Even in the Byzantine tradition, where Proclus was well known, it was the *Elements* that became the object of a critical commentary. In the Arabic-speaking world, there was some knowledge of Proclus' arguments for the eternity of the world. Indeed, because the beginning of Philoponus' refutation is lost, Proclus' first argument is known only in Arabic translation. But here, too, the *Elements* was the crucial text, in the reworked version that became the *Book of Causes*. This version remained a touchstone for authors writing in Latin even after the *Elements* was translated. One reason that the *Elements* outstripped other Proclean works may have been that its schematic form and explicit 'Euclidean' method made it seem more tractable and also more relevant to authors schooled in Aristotelian demonstrative theory.<sup>52</sup>

We have also called attention to the ironic fact that many authors read Proclus in light of the Pseudo-Dionysius, without realizing (and sometimes while denying) that Dionysius was himself powerfully influenced by the Platonic successor. Dionysius represented the first attempt to 'Christianize' Proclus, but certainly not the last. Nicholas of Methone's better acquaintance with Proclus enabled him to see just how bleak the prospects for this reconciliation were, but he was an exception. Surprisingly, increasing knowledge of Proclus did not dim the enthusiasm of Christian authors for his ideas: as we move into the Renaissance, authors like Nicholas of Cusa and of course Marsilio Ficino eagerly carry on the legacy.<sup>53</sup> But for a conclusion to this survey of the medieval legacy of Proclus, we can do no better than turn to

Dante. In his *Convivio*, he explains Beatrice's outward physical beauty as an effect of her soul as follows. He explains:

[S]ince, as is stated in the *Book of Causes*, every cause bestows on its effect a share in the goodness which it has received from its own cause, the soul bestows on its body and communicates to it a share in the goodness of its own cause, who is God. (*Conv.* III 6.11; tr. C. Ryan)

The reference is one of several to the *Book of Causes* found in Dante. In this case, one somehow suspects that Proclus would have had no objection.

## 15.2. RENAISSANCE AND MODERN TIMES

The fifteenth century was a time of momentous historical events in Europe which ushered in a turbulent new era. Before and after the fall of Constantinople in 1453, an important flow of Byzantine negotiators and *émigrés* poured into Italy, bringing with them and spreading knowledge of Greek literature heretofore unknown in the West.<sup>54</sup> In the second half of the fifteenth century, book printing began to spread across Europe. To properly understand the reception of Proclus' thought in the West from the fifteenth century onwards, we first have to look at how the Proclean corpus as we know it today became available and who were the people involved in its transmission.

### 15.2.1. Texts Available

Up to the fifteenth century, Proclus was much better known even than Plato, let alone Plotinus. This was due to the availability of Latin translations by William of Moerbeke of the *Elements of Theology*, the *Tria opuscula*, some fragments of the *Commentary on the Timaeus*, and a large part of the *Commentary on the Parmenides*.<sup>55</sup> Nevertheless, it was not until the fifteenth century that William's translation of the *Commentary on the Parmenides* found an especially attentive and, as we shall see, creative reader in Nicholas of Cusa (1401–64). Nicholas, an important cardinal of the Roman Catholic Church, seems to have commissioned two copies of it, executed between 1450 and 1455, one of which he richly annotated and used while writing his own late treatises.<sup>56</sup> Already in 1438, however, having brought a Greek manuscript of Proclus' *Platonic Theology* from Constantinople, Nicholas asked the learned Cameldolese abbot Ambrogio Traversari to translate it into Latin. Traversari actually started working on it in 1439, but the task was not accomplished until 1461–2 by Pietro Balbi, a former assistant of Basilios Bessarion, on whom more shortly. Nicholas was in possession of two copies of this translation,

which he was able to read and annotate before he died in 1464. One copy of a later version of this translation also exists, revised by Balbi himself and dedicated, in 1466, to the king of Naples.<sup>57</sup>

Since the second half of the fifteenth century, an increasing number of humanists were able to read Greek, so the knowledge of Proclus' works was no longer limited to their Latin translations but could also depend on Greek manuscripts, which were increasingly numerous. A prominent role in the tradition of the Greek text of Proclus' works was played by Nicholas' contemporary Basilios Bessarion (1403–72), a former pupil of the Byzantine Platonist Gemistos Plethon. Bessarion moved to Italy, and was invested in 1439 with the rank of cardinal. Bessarion not only brought from Greece a considerable number of manuscripts, but also carefully annotated and emended them. This holds especially for both Proclus' *Platonic Theology* and his *Commentary on the Parmenides*.<sup>58</sup> Bessarion was actively involved in the Plato–Aristotle controversy that marked the fifteenth century in Italy and in which he decisively took the part of Plato against his detractor George of Trebizond. In so doing, he drew heavily on the Neoplatonic exegesis of Plato and Aristotle, thus preparing the way for the Christianized renewal of Neoplatonic philosophy inaugurated only a few years later by Ficino.<sup>59</sup>

Marsilio Ficino (1433–99) was himself an attentive reader of the Greek manuscripts of Proclus' works. Some of them he read in Latin translation,<sup>60</sup> but already in his own *Platonic Theology, or On the Immortality of the Souls*, dating from 1469–74,<sup>61</sup> he displays a rather extensive knowledge of Proclus' positions on different issues. Among the Greek manuscripts available to him were two copies of the *Commentary on the Timaeus*, one copy—the *codex unicus*—of the *Commentary on the Republic*, brought to Italy by Janus Lascaris in 1492, one copy of the *Commentary on the Alcibiades* and one copy of the commentary by Nicholas of Methone on Proclus' *Elements of Theology*.<sup>62</sup> A Greek manuscript with Proclus' *Platonic Theology*, *Elements of Theology*, and *Elements of Physics* contains Ficino's notes. These seem to be the fruit of a long acquaintance with Proclus, although Ficino probably did not get a hold of this particular manuscript until the 1490s.<sup>63</sup> Apparently, given the existence of Latin translations of the *Platonic Theology* and of the *Commentary on the Parmenides*, Ficino and his circle did not consider it urgent to produce further translations of Proclus.

Nevertheless, Ficino did translate some Proclean texts. While his translation of Proclus' *Hymns*,<sup>64</sup> the *Elements of Theology*, and the *Elements of Physics* are lost,<sup>65</sup> two other texts were widely diffused thanks to their inclusion in a selection of Ficino's minor Latin translations from Greek Platonists, dating from 1488–9 and printed in Venice by Aldus Manutius in 1497: the excerpts from the *Commentary on the Alcibiades* and the short treatise *On Sacrifice and Magic*, for which Ficino's Latin version remained the only witness until the rediscovery of its Greek original in the twentieth century.<sup>66</sup> Besides this, in

1492 Ficino also translated excerpts from the *Commentary on the Republic* which, in their turn, were included in the collection of Ficino's *Letters* and printed in 1495.<sup>67</sup> Still, unlike Plato and Plotinus, Proclus did not enjoy the privilege of having all his extant writings translated and printed as early as the fifteenth century. Several translations produced in the sixteenth century remained unpublished and exist only in rare manuscripts. One anonymous translation of the *Commentary on the Timaeus* was produced in northern Italy, and between 1520 and 1526 Nicholas Scutelli (1490–1542), an Augustinian friar and Platonist, translated Proclus' *Platonic Theology*, his *Commentary on the Parmenides*, his *Commentary on the Alcibiades*, and his *Commentary on the Republic*.<sup>68</sup>

Around 1500, another branch of Proclus' writings came to light. The Italian humanist Giorgio Valla (1447–1500) translated and inserted large excerpts from Proclus' *Commentary on the First Book of Euclid's Elements* and his *Outline of Astronomical Hypotheses* into his monumental encyclopedia *Seek and Shun* (*De expetendis et fugiendis rebus*).<sup>69</sup> He included also the astronomical treatise *The Sphere*, an excerpt drawn from the *Elements of Astronomy* by Geminus of Rhodes, wrongly attributed to Proclus already earlier in the fifteenth century and first printed in a Latin translation by Thomas Linacre as early as 1499 (see Todd 2003). Ironically, it was the pseudo-Proclean *Sphere* which became the most popular and most frequently printed of all the writings that circulated under Proclus' name.

The first printed editions of Proclus' genuine works in Greek were those executed by the German humanist and Protestant theologian Simon Grynaeus (1493–1541) in Basel. In 1531\* he edited, under the title of *De motu*, the text of the *Elements of Physics*. In 1533\* he included in his edition of Euclid's *Elements* the *editio princeps* of Proclus' commentary. In 1534\*, while editing the Greek text of Plato's works, he did the same for Proclus' commentaries on the *Republic* and on the *Timaeus*. Finally, in 1540\* Grynaeus published the Greek text of the *Outline of Astronomical Hypotheses* (see Plate 15.1). The next—and for a long time last—*editio princeps* followed only in 1618\* with the *Platonic Theology* and *Elements of Theology*. This had been prepared some years earlier, together with a Latin translation, by the vagrant classicist Æmilius Portus (1550–1614/15),<sup>70</sup> at the request of the Duke of Schleswig-Holstein and published in Hamburg. In the meantime, Giorgio Valla's Latin translation of the *Outline of Astronomical Hypotheses* appeared in a 1541\* edition of Ptolemy's *Opera* and Francesco Patrizi (1529–97), the most important Platonist of the sixteenth century, published in 1583\* in Ferrara his Latin translation of the *Elements of Theology* and *Elements of Physics*.

With Portus' edition of the *Platonic Theology* the golden age of Proclean prints had already passed its zenith. Interested readers were satisfied with what had been already published, connoisseurs contented themselves with the manuscripts, and the enthusiasm for Neoplatonic philosophy began to

decline. There was no further *editio princeps* of Proclus until the nineteenth century, so that part of the Proclean corpus—the commentaries on the *Parmenides*, on the *Alcibiades*, and on the *Cratylus*—was available only in manuscript until then. It was only the revival of Neoplatonic studies in the early nineteenth century, linked to the boom of German Idealism and signalled by Thomas Taylor's (1758–1835) English translations of the Neoplatonists, that finally led to the edition of the remaining Proclean texts. In 1820\* the German classicist Georg Friedrich Creuzer (1771–1858) published the *Commentary on the Alcibiades* (see Segonds 1985: pp. cxxix–cxxx). In the same year the French classicist Jean François Boissonade de Fontarabie (1774–1857) provided the *editio princeps* of the *Commentary on the Cratylus*. Finally, also in 1820 one of the most prominent French scholars and philosophers of the time, Victor Cousin (1792–1867), inspired by Creuzer's editorial activity, launched his project of *Procli philosophi platonici Opera*, in which he published, in six volumes, the texts of the *Tria opuscula* (vol. I), the *Commentary on the Alcibiades* (vols II–III) and the *Commentary on the Parmenides* (vols IV–VI), based on the manuscripts of the Paris Royal Library (Cousin 1820–7\*). Significantly, the volumes IV–VI are dedicated, alongside J. F. Boissonade, to 'my friends and teachers F. J. W. Schelling and G. W. F. Hegel, leaders in today's philosophy, who restored the One of Parmenides and Plato'. With Cousin's edition, revised and re-edited by him as *Procli opera inedita* (1864\*), the long story of Proclus' first prints was closed and a new era of modern Proclean scholarship—with some minor new discoveries—opened. We will not look into that period here, but instead take a closer look at how Proclus' thought was received in theology, philosophy, and science from the fifteenth century until this new era.

### 15.2.2. Reception in the Theology and Metaphysics of the Fifteenth and Sixteenth Centuries: Cusanus, Ficino, Patrizi

Proclus' reception in the fifteenth century still had much in common with his reception in the Middle Ages. This is due mainly to two factors. First, although Lorenzo Valla expressed his doubts concerning the authorship of the Dionysian corpus as early as the 1440s in his *Comments on the New Testament*,<sup>71</sup> the authority of Dionysius as a disciple of the Apostle Paul—hence not only superior to Proclus as a Christian but also prior to him in time—remained acknowledged so that Proclus continued to be read and interpreted in the light of Dionysius. Second, the main interest fifteenth-century Western readers took in Proclus still focused on his conception of the One as the first principle in the context of theology. Nevertheless, the access to Proclus' genuine works gradually sharpened the sensibility for Proclus' particular contribution to the metaphysics of the One.

Nicholas of Cusa was strongly attracted by Proclus' effort to push the transcendence of the First Principle to the utmost. He found this conception both in the *Commentary on the Parmenides* and in the *Platonic Theology*. It fit well into his own philosophical theology, first outlined in his *On Learned Ignorance* (*De docta ignorantia*, 1440).<sup>72</sup> There Nicholas formulated his innovative conception of God in terms of the 'coincidence of opposites'. God is an actual infinity that transcends any finite determination. Being an absolute *maximum* as well as an absolute *minimum* of any of them, opposite determinations coincide in him (*De doct. ign.* I 4). As such, however, he is incomprehensible to any kind of finite thought and can only be approached by way of negations. In his *On Surmises* (*De coniecturis*, before 1444), Nicholas refines this conception by stating that, if the conjunction of opposites is accessible to the insight of the intellect, the absolute Oneness of God is a 'negation of opposites, disjunctively and conjunctively' (*De coni.* I 6, § 24.56 Koch, Bormann, and Senger). This complex of thoughts made Nicholas particularly sensitive to Proclus' arguments concerning the One.

Although elements of Proclean thought are already present in his early writings, he first expressly mentions Proclus only in his *De beryllo* (1458, § 12.11–12 Senger and Bormann). As modern scholarship has shown, he draws on him more extensively in his last treatises, *Who Art Thou* (*Tu quis es*), also called *On the Beginning* (*De principio*, 1459), *On Not-Other* (*De non aliud*, 1462), and *On the Pursuit of Wisdom* (*De venatione sapientiae*, 1463).<sup>73</sup> Even there, Nicholas' reception of Proclus is marked by his conviction that Proclus is posterior to Dionysius.<sup>74</sup> This is important for Nicholas' use of Proclean ideas in the context of the Christian theology of the divine Trinity. In *Who Art Thou* he drew upon Proclus' distinction, based on the interpretation of the first two hypotheses of Plato's *Parmenides*, between the first One as *unum absolutum* or *exaltatum*, transcending being, opposites, affirmation, and negation (*Tu quis es* §§ 19–21, 28, 39), and the second One as *unum ens* or *unum coordinatum multitudini*, i.e. 'the One which is' or 'the One correlated with a multitude' (§§ 19, 28, 39). In these two Ones Nicholas sees God as a transcendent principle of everything, on the one hand, and the world as a plurality of what comes from this principle, on the other. Still, God as *unum absolutum* is for Nicholas 'not being' only insofar as regarded in itself. Regarded as the principle of multiple things, in which the latter exist 'in a better way' than they exist in themselves, however, it is 'maximally being' (*maxime ens*; *Tu quis es* §§ 34.15, 34.19). Moreover, the principle creates these things by expressing itself first, as in a word, so that, before its creation, the world is in God as in his Word (§ 38). Thus, for Nicholas, in contrast to Proclus, the absolute One expresses itself and, in so doing, also relates to itself, the bond between the Principle and its Word being Love.

The most noteworthy borrowing from Proclus in Nicholas of Cusa, however, is the divine name *non aliud*, introduced in the dialogue *On Not-Other*

and discussed also in his recapitulating treatise *On the Pursuit of Wisdom*. Nicholas discovered in this expression perhaps the most appropriate name of God who at the same time is hidden in his absolute transcendence and reveals himself in his creation. As Werner Beierwaltes has shown,<sup>75</sup> Nicholas borrowed the expression *non aliud* from Proclus' formulations in the *Commentary on the Parmenides* and in the *Platonic Theology*, concerning the first One and removing any form of otherness from it. In Proclus these formulations state that the One is 'nothing other' than the One, stressing that it is even not 'other' in respect to anything else. The Latin translation of Proclus' οὐδὲν ἄλλο by *nichil aliud* in this context suggested to Nicholas the expression *non aliud* as an 'enigmatic name' of God stressing *both* his transcendence to and his immanence in his creation (see Plate 15.2). For Nicholas, this name reads, more paradoxically than in Proclus, as 'not-other is not-other than not-other' (*De non aliud* I 4.29–30; V 12.18). It defines itself through itself in relation to itself, being thus a revelation of God's 'unitrinity' (V 12.20, 13.16). On the other hand, it is presupposed in any definition of the other since 'other is not other than other', e.g., 'the sky is not other than the sky' (*De non aliud* I 5.3). The name *non aliud* thus defines not only itself but also everything else. In so doing it is not only *above* all otherness but also *in* anything other than itself. In his last writings, Nicholas raises the Not-Other as the name of God even above the Proclean One. But he transforms the concept of Not-Other that he borrows from Proclus into his own and integrates it into his Christian theology of divine transcendence, 'unitrinity', and immanence.

Another prominent and no less creative reception of Proclus' thought in metaphysics and theology was that of Marsilio Ficino. Most probably, Ficino knew Proclus' *Commentary on the Parmenides* in William's translation from a very early stage in his career as Platonic philosopher. The basic metaphysical scheme put forward in Ficino's own *Platonic Theology* (1469–74), viz. the set of five levels of reality—God, mind, soul, quality, and body—may have been inspired by Neoplatonic interpretations of Plato's *Parmenides* referred to in Proclus' commentary, as M. J. B. Allen (1982) has suggested (but Ficino may have found this scheme more easily in Porphyry's *Sentences* 10 and 12). Ficino's reception of Proclus differs from Cusanus' because of his much better knowledge of Plato and other ancient Platonists, particularly Plotinus. Ficino also has a much more detailed knowledge of Proclus himself, including Proclus' cosmology, psychology, and physics as displayed in Proclus' *Commentary on the Timaeus*.

On the other hand, he shares with Nicholas the conviction that the writer of the Dionysian corpus was a disciple of the Apostle Paul. In Ficino's comprehensive vision of the history of the revelation of the divine wisdom, which starts with Zoroaster and Hermes (see Allen 1990) and continues up to Ficino himself, there is a central sequence leading from Christ to St John, St Paul, and St Dionysius. Then, there is a split between Christian and pagan versions of

Platonic theology, all of which, nevertheless, derive from the same source. Despite this anachronistic construction, Ficino is well aware of the differences between particular Platonists, both pagan and Christian. He also distinguishes between Plato and his followers who adumbrated the Christian revelation on the one hand and Christian authors like Dionysius or Augustine who express it more fully (Allen 1984) on the other. This helps him to refrain from reading too much of the Christian doctrine into authors like Plotinus or Proclus. On the whole, despite the bold claim that there is a single divine source of inspiration for all versions of Platonic philosophy, Ficino displays a sense of the differences and dependences among them.

In 1492–4 Ficino wrote his own *Commentary on Plato's Parmenides* (Ficino 1576\*: 1136–205), which was partly a response to Pico della Mirandola's 1491 treatise *On Being and the One*.<sup>76</sup> Pico was himself acquainted with Proclus and quoted fifty-five Proclean theses in his famous *Nine Hundred Conclusions* from 1486 (Biondi 1995). In *On Being and the One*, he defended the harmony between Plato and Aristotle by advocating a non-metaphysical interpretation of Plato's *Parmenides* as a mere exercise in dialectics. This enabled him to ascribe the Aristotelian view of the convertibility between being and unity to Plato. Ficino (1576\*: 1164) rejected this claim, pointing out that there was a consensus on the principle of a metaphysical interpretation of Plato's *Parmenides* among ancient Platonists. He himself defended the interpretation of the two first hypotheses along Proclean lines, sharply distinguishing between the absolute One beyond being and the One Being and following the Proclean scheme of negations and affirmations corresponding to them (see Beierwaltes 2002), despite the fact that in his own version of a Christianized Platonism he was inclined to take the Christian God as being both the One and Being (see Beierwaltes 1994). Thus, in Ficino, the difference between the distinctively Neoplatonist, and particularly Proclean, conception of the first principle and its *interpretatio Christiana* comes much more clearly to light than was the case in Nicholas of Cusa. The unshaken authority of Dionysius did not prevent him from seeing the difference since his sight was sharpened by a thorough knowledge of Plotinus.

Ficino's project of a renewal of the Christian philosophy out of the sources of the 'ancient wisdom' (*prisca sapientia*) and the philosophy of Plato and his followers as its privileged channel was taken up once again towards the end of the sixteenth century by Francesco Patrizi, in his monumental *The New Universal Philosophy* (*Nova de universis philosophia*, 1591\*, preceded by a vigorous criticism of Aristotle in his *Discussiones peripateticae* from 1572\* and 1581\*). Proclus was more important for Patrizi than he had been for Ficino. Patrizi drew on an extensive and deep knowledge of the Proclean corpus and was also enthusiastic about Damascius' treatise *On First Principles*.<sup>77</sup> Although Dionysius continues to be, for him, the oldest of the Christian theologians, Proclus and Damascius are more significant sources for his own



version of Christian theology as developed in the *Panarchia*, the second part of *The New Universal Philosophy* dealing with the first principles.

In the *Panarchia*, Patrizi distinguishes the Very First or Most Simple One (*unum primum, simplicissimum*), which is absolutely above all beings, from the Primary Unity (*unitas primaria*), that encompasses all the Unities (*unitates omnes*) also called Ideas (*ideae*). While the Very First One is God the Father, the Primary Unity is God the Son who, proceeding from the Father, turns to him by all his Love, which is the third *huparxis* or *hupostasis* of the Holy Trinity (lib. X, p. 21<sup>r</sup>). When discussing the Very First One, Patrizi goes through the series of negations of the first hypothesis of Plato's *Parmenides*, repeatedly emphasizing the Proclean formula of 'the One which is not other (*non aliud*) than the One' and stressing that it is beyond all essence (*essentiae omnis expers*) and all being (*et ens et esse ei non convenit*; lib. V, p. 9<sup>r-v</sup>). Although it is the 'absolutely first cause' of all beings, their 'proximate cause' is the Primary One, called also the Essential One (*essentiale unum*) because it is already 'linked with essence'. Every particular being participates in this Essential One and takes from it a share in unity and, hence, in essence (*Panarchia*, p. 9<sup>v</sup>).

The Very First One, however, is the Principle of everything and, as such, has to be the ultimate source of it somehow. Patrizi takes delight in displaying the Damascian puzzles about the First Principle and the All of which it is the Principle, but he eventually solves them by distinguishing between different ways of 'being all'. Things can be 'all' either by being 'one'—*uniter* or *unê* as Patrizi translates the Greek *ἐναιώς*—by being 'united' (*unita*) or by being 'distinguished' and thus 'multiplied' (*distincta, atque ideo multiplicata*). They are 'all one' in the Very First One, 'all united' in the Primary or Essential One, but are distinguished 'in the multiplicity' (*in multitudine*) of created beings (lib. VII, p. 13<sup>r</sup>). In this way, the Very First One, despite its absolute transcendence and simplicity, encompasses all things, which are 'all one' in it. This is why it can also be called—alongside its other names—'All-One' (*unomnina*). The Primary One, on the other hand, 'unites' the Ideas which are 'Unities' (*unitates*), i.e. heads of essences (*capita essentiarum*), 'because every essence comes from its own unity, i.e. from its own one' (lib. XII, p. 26<sup>v</sup>). The Primary One together with the Unities and Essences, as well as the Love between the Primary One and the Very First One, come about within the 'paternal depths' (*paternum profundum*, Patrizi's translation of the *πατρικὸς βυθός* of the *Chaldaean Oracles*<sup>78</sup>) whereas all subsequent things are produced, from the essences, outside the paternal depths. In the paternal depths Patrizi still puts the triad of Essence, Life, Mind (*Essentia, Vita, Mens*), which seems to constitute a further differentiation of the Primary Unity or God the Son. Below the boundary of the paternal depths there is a descending—basically Ficinian—hierarchy of creatures: created intellects, souls, natures, qualities, forms, and bodies. In conflating the created intellects (i.e. angels) and the

creating divine Intellect to the single level of Mind, Patrizi arrives at a hierarchy of nine grades below the Very First One: Unity, Essence, Life, Mind, Soul, Nature, Quality, Form, Body.

The whole of Patrizi's *New Universal Philosophy*, not only the *Panarchia*, but also the *Panpsychia* and the *Pancosmia*, including his physics and astronomy, is imbued with Neoplatonic and often distinctively Proclean ideas. Patrizi can be considered the most enthusiastic student of Proclus among Renaissance philosophers. But he also was the last important one. Soon afterwards, times changed in politics and religion, as well as in philosophy.

### 15.2.3. Reception in Early Modern Science: Astronomy and Mathematics

Proclus' writings also had an impact on early modern science. Some of his doctrines—on nature, on light, on space—resonated in what can be considered early modern physics in authors like Ficino and Patrizi. But physics, for these authors, constituted an integral part of philosophy. More surprising is the impact of Proclus' writings on sciences, such as astronomy and mathematics, which developed, at least to some extent, outside this framework.

An interesting case is that of Proclus' *Outline of Astronomical Hypotheses*. This work consists of Proclus' exposition and criticism of the hypotheses on which Greek astronomers based their mathematical explanations of the movements of heavenly bodies. Its structure follows more or less the main sections of Ptolemy's *Almagest*.<sup>79</sup> Proclus first offers a survey, in ten points, of the main phenomena that stimulated the search for explanatory hypotheses in astronomy (*Hyp.* I 11–31, 6.12–16.16) before proceeding to an exposition of these hypotheses, a scrutiny of their effectiveness and a general criticism of them. He does not attack the basic principle of Greek mathematical astronomy, namely, the assumption that the movements of heavenly bodies must be reducible to uniform circular motions. But he objects to the hypotheses of eccentric deferents, epicycles, and eccentric epicycles. These hypotheses are, according to him, mere artificial devices that do not exist in nature (*Hyp.* I 2, 2.8, etc.; VII 51–2, 236.15–22). They cannot, therefore, be true causes. Besides this, while he acknowledges that, by these means, the astronomers manage to save the phenomena on most of the points listed, he objects that they fail on two important points. They are not able to substantiate the order of the planets they assume and they must be wrong on the theory of the precession of the equinoxes.<sup>80</sup> About the latter point Proclus himself was wrong, but he was right about the former.

As we have seen, a substantial part of Proclus' *Hypotyposis* was included, in Latin translation, in Giorgio Valla's encyclopedia *De expetendis et fugiendis rebus*. Here its authorship was not clearly stated, though, and its important last

chapter was omitted.<sup>81</sup> Nonetheless, it came to light in this form already in 1501, whereas the Greek text did not appear until 1540 and Valla's integral translation of Proclus' treatise, duly attributed to his authorship, in 1541. It is more than likely that it had an impact on Nicholas Copernicus (1473–1543) (see Ehlers 1975: 22–92). Although there is no direct evidence that Copernicus studied its Greek text (as he studied Proclus' *Commentary on Euclid*),<sup>82</sup> he certainly made use of the corresponding parts of Valla's encyclopedia when writing his *On the Revolution of Celestial Spheres*.<sup>83</sup> Several points in Proclus' treatise may have been of interest to Copernicus, such as Proclus' criticism of the lack of proofs for the order of the planets or his claim to bring the hypotheses into accordance with nature. Copernicus, being himself critically inclined, may also have welcomed Proclus' exposure of the dissension among the ancient astronomers. Whether or not Copernicus himself knew the authorship and the concluding chapter of the *Hypotyposis*, Georg Joachim Rheticus (1514–74), the author of the 'first report' on Copernicus' theory, the *Narratio prima* (1540\*), and the first editor of his *De revolutionibus* (1543\*), proposes in the concluding *Dialogue* to his own *Canon of the Science of Triangles* (1551\*: C ii<sup>r</sup>) that Proclus' treatise on astronomical hypotheses be introduced in the schools in order to acquaint the youth with sound fundamentals of the theory of celestial motions.

Proclus' *Commentary on Euclid's Elements* made an even more significant and direct impact on the mathematicians and theoreticians of mathematics of the sixteenth century. Although its *editio princeps* appeared only in 1533 and was not satisfactory, Proclus' commentary had been known since the fifteenth century.<sup>84</sup> The author of a new translation of Euclid into Latin, Bartolomeo Zamberti, promised to translate Proclus as early as 1505. His translation, however, was not printed and is preserved in a single manuscript dating from 1539 (see Crapulli 1969: 21–2 n. 18). A decisive step was made by Francesco Barozzi (1537–1604), who collated several manuscripts of the commentary and provided a reliable Latin translation which appeared in 1560\*.<sup>85</sup> Moreover, important parts of the first prologue of the *Commentary on Euclid* were translated by Konrad Dasypodius (Konrad Rauchfuss, 1530/32–1600/1) and printed in his *Volumen II. mathematicum* from 1570\*.<sup>86</sup> Proclus' first prologue, with its considerations about principles, common theorems, and classification of different mathematical disciplines, provided fuel for the debate about the very nature of mathematical science.<sup>87</sup>

In this debate, the concept of *mathesis universalis* was introduced which was later picked up by Descartes in his *Regulae* (X. 374–9 Adam and Tannery) and had a great future in Leibniz and his posterity. Traditionally, mathematics was divided into the four sciences of the *quadrivium*: arithmetic, music, geometry, and astronomy. Each of them was assigned its own subject matter. Multitude per se was the subject of arithmetic, the relations between multitudes that of music, stable magnitude the subject of geometry, and the moving magnitude

that of astronomy. This classification of mathematical sciences, referred to by Proclus as the 'Pythagorean' one (*in Eucl.* 35.21–36.3), was current in the West on the authority of Boethius (*Inst. arith.* I 1). At the beginning of the sixteenth century, these four branches were considered to be united by a common subject matter (*natura communis*) called 'quantity', of which multitude and magnitude are two parts, i.e. discrete quantity and continuous quantity. The whole of these four sciences was called *mathesis universa* (see Crapulli 1969: 9–11).

Proclus' *Commentary on Euclid* introduced into the debate the question whether there is a mathematical science of its own dealing with the *natura communis* of mathematical sciences, abstracting from what is specific to each of them.<sup>88</sup> Against the background of Aristotle's statement that equality and inequality constitute the distinctive mark of quantity (*Cat.* 6, 6a26–35), so that proportion is to be found first in quantity, the question was raised whether book V of Euclid's *Elements*, which deals with the theory of ratios and proportions, is to be identified with such a common science of mathematics. This idea was encouraged by the Latin translation, in book V of the *Elements*, of the Greek term μέγεθος as *quantitas*. In the course of this debate, various names were applied to this common science such as *scientia communis*, *universalis mathematica scientia*, *mathesis universalis*, *prima mathesis*, or *mathematica generalis*. Whatever name it was given, this science was to be distinguished from the *mathesis universa*, understood as a sum of different mathematical disciplines. It was intended as a higher, or more fundamental, science dealing with principles and theorems common to all mathematical sciences.

Proclus' first prologue provided enough material to stimulate this debate. Understandably, in his eyes, the objects of the different branches of mathematics have their common principles—the limit and the unlimited—as they also have their common theorems which apply to 'some common nature' (*in Eucl.* 8.2–3). But Proclus himself was not definite enough about this science, and there was no consensus about it among the authors of the sixteenth century. The most radical objection—by Jacopo Zabarella or Giuseppe Biancani—was that quantity is not a univocal genus, nor are proportion or equality predicated univocally of continuous and discrete quantities (cf. Crapulli 1969: 148). Even among those who stuck to a 'common nature' of mathematical objects there were different opinions about the status of a corresponding common science. Nonetheless, those who took part in this debate, starting with Alessandro Piccolomini in 1548 and continuing with Pierre de la Ramée, Konrad Dasypodius, Benito Pereira, and Adrian van Roomen up to the German encyclopedist Johann Heinrich Alsted in the early seventeenth century, all had in common the fact that they relied on Proclus' *Commentary on Euclid*.<sup>89</sup>

At the turn of the seventeenth century, Proclus influenced another key figure of the modern sciences, Johannes Kepler (1571–1630). Kepler, who

studied Protestant theology in Tübingen and became the imperial mathematician in Prague, was not only an adherent of Copernicus in astronomy but also an avowed Platonist. His first major work, *The Cosmographic Mystery* (*Mysterium cosmographicum*, 1596\*), reads as a manifesto of Christian Platonism in cosmology. Kepler provides arguments in favour of the heliocentric system on a priori grounds, drawing on the Christian dogma of the Trinity and on the geometrical theory of Platonic solids, i.e. five regular polyhedra. As a matter of fact, Kepler shared the Platonic view—based on Plato's *Timaeus*—that physical reality, including that of celestial regions and bodies, derives from an archetype in God's mind and that the structures of the corporeal world are geometrical in essence, so that geometrical forms of bodies are manifestations of that divine archetype (*Myst. cosm.*, ch. 2). This 'archetypal' approach to natural philosophy proved fruitful when confronted with, and tested against, the empirical astronomy of Tycho and others (cf. Martens 2000). The ingenious combination of methodological, astronomical, and philosophical considerations eventually resulted in the discovery of what is known as Kepler's laws of planetary motion and, no less importantly, in a novel conception of astronomy in terms of mathematical physics (see Koyré 1973).

The main results of Kepler's astronomical discoveries were published in his *New Astronomy* (*Astronomia nova*, 1609\*) and worked into his *Rudolphine Tables* of the positions of stars and planets (*Tabulae Rudolphinae*, 1627\*). The philosophical background for these discoveries, first outlined in the *Cosmographic Mystery*, was laid out more fully in Kepler's *Harmony of the World* (*Harmonices mundi*, 1619\*). The aim of this book is to work out a theory of harmony based on the geometry of the circle (rather than on arithmetic) and to give an account of planetary motions in terms of this theory. It is in this context that Kepler draws heavily on Proclus' philosophy of mathematics, quoting at length from the first prologue of the *Commentary on Euclid* (Kepler, *Harm.* 218.33–221.39 Caspar = Proclus, *in Eucl.* 12.2–18.4). In the *Harmony* he supplements his 'archetypal' theory with the Proclean idea that mathematical, particularly geometrical, concepts are drawn by the soul 'both from herself and from the Intellect' (*in Eucl.* 16.4–5), i.e. as Kepler's Christian interpretation has it, that they are put into the human soul as 'image and likeness' of God himself so that the soul can work with them prior to sense-perception.<sup>90</sup> This is an important element in Kepler's methodological considerations. The a priori knowledge of the geometrical forms and their properties makes it possible to perceive them in material bodies, which receive them from the Creator as a material image of Him. In recognizing the harmonies characteristic of the geometrical forms laid by God upon the matter of this world, the human soul activates her inborn knowledge of them. In doing so, as Kepler emphasizes, the soul achieves a sort of mystic union with God himself (*Harm.* 225.10–16 Caspar).

Of all the early modern scientists who made use of Proclean works and ideas in astronomy and mathematics, Kepler was no doubt the most successful. He

was also the closest to the theological aims of that very first early modern reader of Proclus, Nicholas of Cusa, or as Kepler referred to him, 'the divine Cusanus' (*Myst. cosm.* 23.13–14 Caspar).

#### 15.2.4. Reception in German Idealism: Hegel

A revival of the interest in Proclus as a metaphysician would not occur until the nineteenth century. The idealistic turn of the post-Kantian philosophy in Germany, inaugurated by J. G. Fichte, created a philosophical climate favourable for a new interest in Neoplatonism in general. Although this interest focused first and foremost on Plotinus,<sup>91</sup> Proclus became a particular favourite of G. W. F. Hegel (1770–1831). Hegel praised Proclus in his *Lectures on the History of Philosophy* (first published by C. J. Michelet in 1833–6) as 'the peak of Neoplatonic philosophy'.<sup>92</sup> This statement was of great significance, since, on Hegel's account, Neoplatonic philosophy itself was the highest achievement of Greek philosophy as a whole, an appreciation which stood in sharp contrast to the presentation of it as a decadent phenomenon by historians of philosophy of the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries.

Hegel's appraisal of Proclus was a consequence of his own philosophy of the Absolute and the 'logic' of its development from the 'abstract' to the 'concrete', a process at the end of which Spirit (*Geist*) understands itself as absolute and, in so doing, accomplishes absolute subjectivity. At the same time, Hegel conceived of universal history as such a process and understood the history of philosophy itself as an unfolding of Spirit. Periods in universal history, such as antiquity, correspond to particular stages in this development. If Proclus stands 'at the peak' of the concluding—i.e. summarizing and completing—period in the history of Greek philosophy, for Hegel it means that Proclus' philosophy is the fullest accomplishment in universal history before Hegel's own philosophy. As a matter of fact, the goal assigned to Greek philosophy, as Hegel conceived of it, namely, the liberation of thought from sense-perception, was fully achieved in Neoplatonism. In the latter, thought became a 'concrete' totality, i.e. a thinking which encompasses everything within itself, a self-thinking 'Idea' for which nothing is an external, 'abstract' object. Yet this, in Hegel's eyes, was not the final goal of universal history. An important element was still lacking in Neoplatonic philosophy: the mediation between Spirit as self-thinking Idea and every individual human being. This mediation was, according to Hegel, inaugurated only by Christianity and fully realized in thought only by the development of modern philosophy, starting with Descartes and leading to Hegel's own system. It is from this general perspective that Hegel communicates with Proclus, as if he was looking back from the highest peak in the history of the universal Spirit at its penultimate peak.

Within this general framework, Hegel offered his own interpretation of Proclus' metaphysics, drawing mainly on the *Elements of Theology* and the *Platonic Theology*.<sup>93</sup> If he appreciated Proclus more than Plotinus it is because Proclus introduced an articulated hierarchy between the One and the Intellect. For Hegel, this represented progress towards a more 'concrete' understanding of the realm of the Idea. But even more than this, Hegel admired the dynamics of the constitution of Proclus' universe which unfolds in triads of *peras-apeiron-mikton* (Limit-Unlimited-Mixed), *monê-proodos-epistrophê* (Immanence-Procession-Reversion), *ousia-dunamis-zôê* (Being-Power-Life) or *ousia-zôê-nous* (Being-Life-Intellect). In the inner dynamics of these triadic structures, Hegel saw a prototype of his own science of logic. Accordingly, he interpreted Proclus in the light of his own system. For instance, he assimilated the Proclean concept of procession (*proodos*) to the productive negativity of his own dialectics. Moreover, in contrast to the basic tenets of Neoplatonic metaphysics, Hegel projected into Proclus his own idea of 'becoming' (*Werden*) of the Absolute, a process at the end of which the Absolute reaches its full 'concrete reality' which it did not have at the beginning. Thus, Hegel offered an inspired and positive interpretation of Proclus' metaphysics, a break with the previous two centuries of indifference towards this aspect of the Proclean legacy.

After Hegel, an anti-metaphysical turn in philosophy again cast a shadow over Proclus. When Ludwig Feuerbach labelled Hegel a 'German Proclus' in 1843,<sup>94</sup> it was no compliment. But Hegel inaugurated a new era in historical studies which soon began to liberate themselves from the metaphysical contentions of his system. Philosophers of the past were now studied for what they were in their own times. The first accounts of Proclus' philosophy written in this vein were that of Étienne Vacherot in 1846 in France and of Eduard Zeller in 1852 in Germany.<sup>95</sup> In 1895, as already mentioned, the old suspicion expressed by Lorenzo Valla concerning the identity of Dionysius the Areopagite eventually proved justified, and his dependence on Proclus firmly established by the German scholars Joseph Stiglmayr and Hugo Koch.<sup>96</sup> Thanks in part to this discovery, it would henceforth be possible to understand not just Proclus' own works within a genuine historical context but also his legacy.

#### APPENDIX: FIRST EDITIONS AND EARLY MODERN PRINTS QUOTED

- Barozzi, Francesco (ed.) (1560). *Procli Diadochi in primum Euclidis Elementorum librum Commentariorum libri IIII*, Patavii: Gratiotus Perchacinus.
- Boissonade de Fontarabie, Jean François (1820). *Ex Procli scholiis in Platonis Cratylum excerpta e codd.* edidit Io. Fr. Boissonade, Lipsiae: A. G. Weigel/Lugduni Bavorum: S. et J. Luchtmans.

- Copernicus, Nicolaus (1543). *De revolutionibus orbium coelestium, libri VI*, Norimbergae: I. Petraeus.
- Cousin, Victor (ed.) (1820–7). *Procli philosophi Platonici Opera*, e codd. mss. Biblioth. Reg. Parisiensis, num primum edidit . . . V. Cousin, Parisiis: J. M. Eberhart (vols I–V)/F. Didot (vol. VI).
- Cousin, Victor (ed.) (1864). *Procli philosophi Platonici opera inedita* quae primus olim e codd. mss. Parisinis italicisque vulgaverat nunc secundis curis emendavit et auxit V. Cousin, Parisiis: A. Durand.
- Creuzer, Georg Friedrich (ed.) (1820). *Initia philosophiae ac theologiae ex Platoniciis fontibus ducta sive Procli Diadochi et Olympiodori in Platonis Alcibiadem commentarii* ex codd. mss. . . . edidit itemque eiusdem Procli *Institutionem Theologicam* . . . adiecit F. Creuzer, Pars prima: 'Procli Successoris in Platonis Alcibiadem Priorem commentarii', Francofurti ad Moenum: Officina Brœnneriana.
- Dasypodius, Konrad (1570). *Volumen primum mathematicum per Cunradum Dasypodium in utilitatem Academiae argentinensis collectum. Volumen II complectens praecepta mathematica, astronomica, logistica*, Argentorati: J. Rihel.
- Ficino, Marsilio (1482). *Theologia platonica de immortalitate animorum*, Florentiae: A. Miscominus.
- Ficino, Marsilio (1576). *Opera*, Basileae: H. Petri.
- Grynæus, Simon (ed.) (1531). *Procli insignis philosophi compendiarie de Motu disputatio*, Basileae: I. Bebel et M. Ysingrinus.
- Grynæus, Simon (ed.) (1533). *Εὐκλείδου Στοιχείων βιβλ. ιε' ἐκ τῶν Θέωνος συνουσιῶν. Εἰς τοῦ αὐτοῦ τὸ πρῶτον ἐξηγημάτων Πρόκλου βιβλ. δ'*, Basileae: I. Hervagius.
- Grynæus, Simon (ed.) (1534). *Platonis omnia opera cum commentariis Procli in Timaeum & Politica*, Basileae: I. Valder.
- Grynæus, Simon (ed.) (1540). *Procli Diadochi Hypotyposis astronomicarum positionum*, Basileae: I. Valder.
- Kepler, Johannes (1596). *Prodromus dissertationum cosmographicarum, continens mysterium cosmographicum*, Tübingae: G. Gruppenbachius.
- Kepler, Johannes (1609). *Astronomia nova AITIOΛΟΓΗΤΟΣ, seu physica coelestis, tradita commentariis de motibus stellae Martis*, ex observationibus G. V. Tychoonis Brahe, Heidelberg: Vögelin.
- Kepler, Johannes (1619). *Harmonices mundi libri V*, Lincii: I. Plancus.
- Kepler, Johannes (1627). *Tabulae Rudolphinae*, Ulmae: J. Saurius.
- Patrizi, Francesco (1572). *Discussionum Peripateticarum*, Tomi primi, Libri XIII, Venetiis: D. de Franciscis.
- Patrizi, Francesco (1581). *Discussionum Peripateticarum Tomus Secundus Aristotelis et Veterum Philosophorum Concordiam Continens*, Basileae: Pernea Lecythus.
- Patrizi, Francesco (trans.) (1583). *Procli Lycii Diadochi, Platonici philosophi eminentissimi, Elementa Theologica, et Physica*, Ferrariae: D. Mamarellus.
- Patrizi, Francesco (1591). *Nova de universis philosophia*, Ferrariae: B. Mammerellus.
- Pico della Mirandola, Giovanni (1496). *Commentationes*, 2 vols, Bononiae: B. Hectoris.
- Portus, Æmilius (ed.) (1618). *Procli Successoris Platonici In Platonis Theologiam Libri sex*, Hamburgi et Francofurti: Rulandii.
- Rheticus, Georg Joachim (1540). *De libris revolutionum . . . Nicolai Copernici . . . narratio prima*, Gedani: F. Rhodus.



- Rheticus, Georg Joachim (1551). *Canon doctrinae triangulorum* nunc primum a Georgio Ioachimi Rhético in lucem editus, Lipsiae: W. Gunterus.
- Valla, Giorgio (1501). *De expetendis et fugiendis rebus opus*, Venetiis: A. Romanus.
- Valla, Giorgio (ed./tr.) (1541). *Claudii Ptolemaei Pelusiensis Alexandrini... omnia, quae extant, opera. Procli Diadochi hypotheses astronomicarum positionum*, Basileae: H. Petri.
- Valla, Lorenzo (1505). *In Latinam Novi testamenti interpretationem... adnotationes...*, Parrhisiis: I. Petit.

## NOTES

1. For a more detailed account on particular aspects of Proclus' legacy, including a fuller picture of the Byzantine reception, see recently Gersh (2014). Our chapter was written before this volume appeared.
2. On this fraught situation see e.g. Athanassiadi (1993), Watts (2006).
3. Combès (1987b: 221). For a recent overview of Damascius' thought, see Van Riel (2010).
4. On this, see the ground-breaking study Steel (1978).
5. On time, see Galpérine (1980), Sorabji (1983). On pleasure, see Van Riel (2000, 2008).
6. The theory is set forth in his *De Principiis*, now translated into English in Abhel-Rappe (2010).
7. On this topic, see Lang and Macro (2001), Wildberg (1987), Share and Wilberding (2005–10), Judson (1987), Phillips (1997), Sorabji (1987), and Verbeke (1982).
8. A recent study of *Against Proclus*, Mueller-Jourdan (2011), sees the text not so much as a case of interfaith disputation but rather as a response to philosophical debate within the school of Ammonius.
9. See De Haas (1997) and Mueller-Jourdan (2011).
10. See Luiheid and Schorem (1987), Suchla (1990), Heil and Ritter (1991). On his relation to Proclus, see Gersh (1978), Saffrey (1982), Sheldon-Williams (1972), and, more generally, Rorem (1993).
11. Ritter (2005: 88 n. 2), following Suchla.
12. See Stang (2012: e.g. 143, with the rejection of the false dichotomy).
13. Compare Proclus' use of the term *ὑπεραπόφασις* at *in Parm.* 523, cited by Stang (2012: 130).
14. Though the Damascian approach might seem to be completely incompatible with Christianity, we will see later that the sixteenth-century thinker Francesco Patrizi draws on the hierarchy of the ones in Damascius to explain the doctrine of the Trinity.
15. For the text, see Angelou (1984). For literature, cf. Angelou (1979), Benakis (1987), Podskalsky (1976), and Terezis (1995). Thanks to Joshua Robinson for his help on this topic.
16. Translation and citation from Athanassiadi (2002: 237).
17. What Podskalsky (1976: 509) nicely terms a *Proklosschwärmerei*. Here I follow the conclusion of Podskalsky's article, which is not really undermined by the survey of

further evidence provided in Benakis (1987). For citations of Proclus in Psellos and Italos see Podskalsky (1976: 516–18) and Benakis (1987: 252–4).

18. As Duffy (2002: 148) remarks, 'obviously in Byzantium at almost any period it was at least a delicate matter to consort with the likes of Plato and Proclus'. Beyond Psellus, significant examples of positive reception are Nicholas' near-contemporary Isaac Sebastokrator (d. after 1152), who paraphrased the *Tria opuscula*, and the considerably later George Gemistos Plethon (d. c.1453). On him, see recently Siniossoglou (2011) and Hladký (2014).
19. See the brief but useful overview by Matula (2011).
20. On this, see Adamson (2002) and Zimmermann (1986).
21. In fact, two of the three Arabic manuscripts of the *Discourse* name the author as *Buruqlus* (i.e. 'Proclus'), but the other Aristotle.
22. An indispensable overview of the text and its reception is D'Ancona and Taylor (2003).
23. For the Arabic and Latin texts, with German translation, see Bardenhewer (1882). For an English translation, see Guagliardo et al. (1996). This translation has the advantage that notes by Taylor compare the Arabic and Latin versions and also note divergences from Proclus' original.
24. On this topic, see the important studies by Cristina D'Ancona, many of which are collected in D'Ancona (1995).
25. Nor were Jewish readers immune to the charms of the work: there was a Hebrew translation, and three commentaries were written on it in Hebrew. See D'Ancona and Taylor (2003: 607–8, 623–4).
26. It should be noted, though, that the same impression is given by some passages in the *Elements* itself, notably § 20; what happens in the Arabic version is not outright distortion, but a deliberate omission of the complications introduced into the hierarchy elsewhere in the *Elements*.
27. Taylor remarks in his notes to Guagliardo et al. (1996) that this proposition (which is proposition 9 in the Latin version, because the fourth proposition of the Arabic version was split into two) has no basis in the *Elements* but 'derives ultimately from the *Enneades* of Plotinus'.
28. On this notion, see D'Ancona (1992a), repr. in D'Ancona (1995).
29. It is also worth noting that the text speaks of the First Cause as not having any 'attribute (*ṣifa*)'. Elsewhere, I have connected this theme in the Neoplatonica Arabica, and in al-Kindi himself, to contemporary concerns in Islamic speculative theology (*kalām*). See Adamson (2003).
30. Discussed in D'Ancona (1992b), repr. in D'Ancona (1995).
31. Thillet and Oudaimah (2001–2).
32. Wakelnig (2006: 48–66 provide a useful overview of the *status quaestionis* on Proclus in Arabic).
33. See her 'Al-Kindī et l'auteur du *Liber de causis*', D'Ancona (1995: 155–93).
34. For edition, translation, and commentary see Wakelnig (2006).
35. See ch. 9 of the *Fuṣūl* and for commentary, Wakelnig (2006: 248, 258).
36. See Taylor (1984) and for the Arabic reception of the *Discourse* more generally Taylor (1986).
37. Taylor (1983) puts the number at 237.

38. Titled *Liber de causis et processu universitatis*, edn and tr. in Anzulewicz (2006). See Sweeney (1980a, 1980b), de Libera (1990, 1992), and Fauser (1994).
39. Saffrey (1954). English tr. in Guagliardo et al. (1996). See further Beierwaltes (1963), D'Ancona (1986), Fabro (1982), and Taylor (1979). Further literature cited extensively in D'Ancona and Taylor (2003: 644).
40. Marlasca (1972). See also Piché (1999), Imbach (1996). For an overview of other engagements with Proclus in the latter half of the thirteenth century, see Sturlese (1987: 270–4).
41. On this translation, see Boese (1985).
42. § 3: *Unde videtur ab aliquo philosophorum Arabum ex praedicto libro Procli excerptus, praesertim quia omnia quae in hoc libro continentur, multo plenius et diffusius continentur in illo*. Cited by proposition number of the commentary and page number from Saffrey (1954). Again, one should note that, after §§ 4–5, the Latin version has proposition numbers one higher than in the Arabic, and of course the commentary follows suit. In early works by Aquinas, he quotes the *Book of Causes* as a work by Aristotle.
43. Another fusion of disparate strands of Proclus' legacy is the curious text entitled *Book of Primary and Secondary Causes*, which combines excerpts from the *Book of Causes* with material from Avicenna and, of all sources, John Scotus Eriugena, a ninth-century philosopher who was deeply influenced by the Pseudo-Dionysius. On this, see D'Alverny (1973).
44. Pera (1950). On this, see O' Rourke (1992), Burrell (2003).
45. Parenthetically, we might note that this is itself a misreading, or at least an oversimplification, of Proclus: at *El. theol.* § 18, he makes a more general point, namely, that every paradigmatic cause exerts causation through its being (*αὐτῷ τῷ εἶναι*) having the character it bestows in a prior fashion (*πρώτως*). This point is applicable to causes of being, which would have being in a prior way, but even causes of features other than being (e.g. life) cause through their being.
46. For Proclus, the First Cause is identified as Good and One, but not as Being, which is a subsidiary principle. See e.g. *El. theol.* § 86, which says that Being is 'closest' to the One but not identical with it. See also Ch. 4 in this volume.
47. At the end of the commentary, Thomas again endorses Dionysius at the expense of the *Book of Causes*, regarding the 'divinity' of intellect and soul. Whereas the *Book of Causes* seems to accept this, Dionysius mentions that they are 'godlike' only in that they have some connection to God, as opposed to being actually divine (§ 3.25). On the other hand, Thomas later (§ 5.41) says the *Book of Causes* is more compatible with Christian doctrine than the teachings of 'the Platonists' because it seems to allow for the possibility that a perfected soul can exist eternally in a perfected body after the resurrection.
48. See Sturlese (1987: 282, with the earlier thinkers discussed at 276–82). On this tradition generally see further de Libera (1984), Flasch (1984), and Imbach (1978).
49. For Berthold's commentary, see Sturlese (1984). On him, see the introduction by Flasch in this edition, and also Aertsen (1992) and Sturlese (1986).

50. Especially if, as D'Ancona has argued, Dionysius also exerted some influence on the reworkings of Plotinus and Proclus in the Kindi circle. For this hypothesis, see the studies collected in D'Ancona (1995).
51. For an excellent study of this, see Aertsen (1992). Beierwaltes (1992a: 149–50) argues that Eckhart takes a more subtle, and more kataphatic position: God is the source of being, and in this sense we can say that He transcends being. But He also has being in the sense of being self-identical, which is the meaning of the biblical *ego sum qui sum*.
52. For this last point as an explanation of its popularity in the fourteenth century, see Sturlese (1986: 155; 1987: 262–3).
53. On Nicholas of Cusa's use of Proclus, see Beierwaltes (1992b).
54. Wilson (1992), Monfasani (1995, 2004).
55. While William had translated the *Elements* already in 1268, his translations of the *Tria opuscula* date only from 1280 and those of the commentaries on the *Timaeus* and on the *Parmenides* from 1280s, cf. Kristeller (1987). For the translation of the *Commentary on the Parmenides*, cf. Steel (1982).
56. Steel (1982: 12–22) and Bormann (1986).
57. Saffrey (1979) and Senger (1986).
58. For his role in the tradition of the *Platonic Theology*, see Saffrey and Westerink (1968–97: i, pp. cxvii–cxxvi), for his role in the tradition of the *Commentary on the Parmenides*, see Luna and Segonds (2007: pp. lxxi–cxxxii).
59. Hankins (1990: 193–263). On Bessarion, see also Monfasani (1995); on Bessarion's library, see Monfasani (2004).
60. Kristeller (1944) = Kristeller (1969: 35–97, esp. 93 n. 144); Luna and Segonds (2007: pp. cdxxi–cdxxii).
61. See Ficino (1482\*). For the modern edition, see Hankins and Allen (2001–6). A list of the first editions and early modern prints referred to in this chapter is to be found in an appendix at the end of this chapter. To distinguish references to works included in this appendix from those included in the general bibliography of this volume, the former are marked with an asterisk (\*).
62. Gentile (2007), Megna (2003, 2004), and Sicherl (1986).
63. Saffrey (1959) with an edition of Ficino's notes.
64. Cf. Ficino (1576\*: 933) and Kristeller (1937: p. cxlv); Kristeller (1987: 127). The Latin translation of four of Proclus' *Hymns* preserved in Cod. Laurentianus XXXVI, 35 and Cod. Ottobonianus 2966 and edited in Klutstein (1987: 111–15) is not by Ficino but seems to go back to Fra' Giovanni Giocondo da Verona and Janus Lascaris, cf. Klutstein 1987 (1–18, 46–52) and Kristeller (1987: 136 n. 2).
65. Ficino (1576\*: 619); Kristeller (1937: pp. clxiv–clxv).
66. Ficino (1576\*: 1908–29), Kristeller (1937: pp. lxix–lx; 1987: 127–8), and Segonds (1985: pp. cxxxv–cxxxvii).
67. Ficino (1576\*: 937–43); Kristeller (1937: p. civ; 1987: 128); Rabassini (1999: 49–65); Gentile (2007: 23–4).
68. Kristeller (1987: 124–7 with n. 57, 70, 80), Luna and Segonds (2007: cdxxvi–cdxlvii), and Segonds (1985: cxxxvii–cxxxviii). On Scutelli, see Monfasani (2005).

69. Valla (1501\*). Cf. Heiberg (1881: 378–9, 396; 1896: 34), Rose (1973: 94–8), and Rosen (1995 = Rosen 1981: 145). Another manuscript of Proclus' *Commentary on Euclid* was in the possession of Bessarion, cf. Rose (1973: 92).
70. Cf. Weber (1854: 36–8); on Portus' background see Karamanolis (2003: 30).
71. Valla (1505\*), ed. Erasmus of Rotterdam.
72. For the edn, see Hoffmann and Klibansky (1932).
73. Bormann (2001), Flash (2001: 500–13), and most fully Beierwaltes (2007b: 165–222, with further references). For the edns of these works, see Bormann and Riemann (1988), Baur and Wilpert (1944), and Klibansky and Senger (1982) respectively.
74. *De venatione sapientiae* XXII, § 64.16. On the impact of Valla's doubts on Cusanus, see Flash (2001: 570–2).
75. Beierwaltes (1979: 346 n. 37; and 2007: 208–12, with further references, esp. 210 n. 75).
76. Published in Pico (1496\*). For the most recent edn, see Ebgi and Bachelli (2010).
77. For details, see Leinkauf (1990); on manuscripts of Proclus possessed by Patrizi, see Leinkauf (1990: 34 n. 31).
78. Lib. IX, p. 18 v. Cf. Proclus, in *Tim.* I 312.7–8; II 92.6–9; *Or. chald.* Fr. 18. See Leinkauf (1990: 38).
79. On the content and the aims of Proclus' *Hypotyposis* see Segonds (1987a or 1987b).
80. *Hyp.* V 11; VII 45–7. See Segonds (1987a, 1987b).
81. Only *Hyp.* I–V is included in Valla's book XVIII, chs i–iiii (Valla's ch. i = *Hyp.* I–II, ch. ii = *Hyp.* III, ch. iii = *Hyp.* IV, ch. iiiii = *Hyp.* V). In his ch. v, Valla mentions Proclus among those who offered an explanation of 'the sphere in the astrolabe' and on whom he will draw in what will follow.
82. Ehlers (1975: 29–38) with a detailed discussion of common points.
83. Rosen (1981). For the edn, see Klaus and Birkenmajer (1959). Nonetheless, *De revolutionibus* (I 10, 64.11–16 Birkenmajer) has four data which are taken from book VII of the *Hypotyposis* (§§ 19–23) and are not contained in Valla's encyclopedia, cf. Birkenmajer (in Klaus and Birkenmajer 1959: 145–8 n. 98). Ehlers (1975) thinks that Copernicus had access, at some point of his career, to a Greek manuscript of the *Hypotyposis*; see also De Pace (2009: 363–5 n. 195, 367–9 n. 210), and Vesel (2014: 217 n. 222). (De Pace and Vesel are not aware of Ehlers.)
84. Cf. n. 69 in this chapter.
85. Cf. Crapulli (1969: 21).
86. Cf. Crapulli (1969: 160–99).
87. Procl., in *Eucl.* 3.1–47.8. On this debate see Crapulli (1969), De Pace (1993), and Rabouin (2010). On Proclus' philosophy of mathematics, see Mueller (1987, 1992), as well as Lernould (2010).
88. For Proclus' views on the branches of mathematics and on the existence of a common nature of the mathematical sciences, see also Ch. 8 in this volume.
89. On further aspects of the impact of Proclus' *Commentary on Euclid*, see De Pace (1993) and Helbing (2000).

90. On Kepler and Proclus, see Speiser (1945: 102), Martens (2000: 34–5, 119), and Claessens (2011); on Proclus' theory see in more detail Lernould (2011).
91. Beierwaltes (1972: 83–153; 2001: 182–228); Hadot (1970, 2004).
92. Hegel, *Vorlesungen*, 93 Glocker. Hegel's account of Proclus in *Vorlesungen*, 71–92 Glocker.
93. See in detail Beierwaltes (1972: 154–87) and Halfwassen (1999: 386–462).
94. Feuerbach, *Grundsätze* § 29, 316.28 Schmidt. Cf. Beierwaltes (1972: 186).
95. Vacherot (1846: III, ii–vi, 210–383); Zeller (1852: § 57, 916–53). On Zeller, see Beierwaltes (1989).
96. Stiglmayr (1895) and Koch (1895, 1900).



## APPENDIX I

### Proclus' Metaphysical and Theological System

This table integrates material provided by Luc Brisson (on the metaphysical principles, the divine, the *Chaldaean Oracles*, and the *Orphic Rhapsodies*) and Gerd Van Riel (on the metaphysical principles and the second hypothesis of the *Parmenides*). The editors are very grateful that they allowed us to use this material in this table. We have further used elements of Chapters 5, 6, 7, 11, and 13. For the metaphysical principles and the *Timaeus*, cf. also the table provided by Opsomer (2000: 131–2). For Proclus' intricate analysis of matter, cf. Van Riel (2008).



Metaphysical Principles	Levels of divine existence	<i>Parm.</i> 2nd hypothesis	Other dialogues	Chaldaean Oracles	Orphic Rhapsodies	Remarks
ONE						
THE ONE	THE ONE	1st Hypothesis		Unique Principle	Chronos	
The Henads	The Henads*				Ether, Chaos	
	Limit (First One) + Unlimited		<i>Phil.</i>			
THE INTELLIGIBLE REALM						
BEING (ON) (mixture)	INTELLIGIBLE GODS (NOËTOI)		<i>Phil.</i> 23c	Paternal Abyss	The Intelligible	Related virtues: Supra-human
INTELLIGIBLE BEING  One Being	FIRST INTELLIGIBLE TRIAD:*	2nd Hypothesis Being			Primordial Egg	
	Intelligible			Father		
	Intelligible and Intellective					
	Intellective		Living Being in Itself ( <i>Tim.</i> )			
INTELLIGIBLE LIFE	SECOND INTELLIGIBLE TRIAD:*	Wholeness		<i>Aiôn</i>	Conceived Egg	
	Intelligible					
	Intelligible and Intellective					
	Intellective					

INTELLIGIBLE INTELLECT	THIRD INTELLIGIBLE TRIAD:*	Plurality ( <i>plêthos</i> )		Total Living Being	Phanes	
	Intelligible		Paradigm ( <i>Tim.</i> )			
	Intelligible and Intellective					
	Intellective					
LIFE (ΖΟΗ)	INTELLIGIBLE-INTELLECTIVE GODS (ΝΟΗΤΟΙ ΚΑΙ ΝΟΕΡΟΙ)			Intelligible-Intellective Gods	Intelligible-Intellective	Related virtues: Theurgical/hieratic
Divine number	FIRST INTELLIGIBLE- INTELLECTIVE TRIAD*	Many ( <i>polla</i> )	Supra-celestial place ( <i>Phdr.</i> )	Triad of Iynges	Three Nights	
	SECOND INTELLIGIBLE- INTELLECTIVE TRIAD*	Whole-Parts	Heaven ( <i>Phdr.</i> )	Triad of Connectors	Three parts of Ouranos	
	THIRD INTELLIGIBLE- INTELLECTIVE TRIAD*	Shape	Sub-celestial vault ( <i>Phdr.</i> )	Triad of Teletarchs	Three gods of the perfective class	
INTELLECT* (ΝΟΥΣ)	INTELLECTIVE GODS (ΝΟΕΡΟΙ)		Zeus and other Olympians ( <i>Phdr.</i> etc.)	Intellective Gods	Intellective	Related virtues: Paradigmatic
INTELLECTIVE BEING	FIRST INTELLECTIVE TRIAD* (Triad of Parents):	In itself- In another		Three Paternal Sources	Triad of Parents	
	Intelligible			Kronos	Kronos	
	Intelligible-Intellective			Hecate	Rheia	
	Intellective		Demiurge ( <i>Tim.</i> )	Zeus	Zeus	1st (universal) demiurgy
INTELLECTIVE LIFE	SECOND INTELLECTIVE TRIAD* (Triad of Immaculate Gods)	Moving and Resting		Three Implacables	Three Immaculate Gods	

(continued)

Continued

Metaphysical Principles	Levels of divine existence	<i>Parm.</i> 2nd hypothesis	Other dialogues	Chaldaean Oracles	Orphic Rhapsodies	Remarks
INTELLECTIVE INTELLECT	SEVENTH DIVINITY* (Monad)	Same and Different		Diaphragm	Castration of Ouranos by Kronos	
SOUL-HYPOSTASIS						
Souls (universal/monadic Souls)	Hypercosmic Gods*	Like and Unlike		Leading Gods	Four triads:	
Hypercosmic/Divine Souls	FIRST HYPERCOSMIC TRIAD		<i>Gorgias</i> 523a3-5	Paternal Triad: Zeus, Poseidon, Hades	Paternal Triad: Zeus, Poseidon, Hades	1st (partial universal) demiurgy: Zeus <sub>2</sub> , Poseidon, Pluto
	SECOND HYPERCOSMIC TRIAD			Coric Triad: Hecate, Soul, Virtue	Coric Triad: Hecate, Soul, Virtue	
	THIRD HYPERCOSMIC TRIAD			Apolloniad Triad: 3 Helios's/3 Apollo's	Apolloniad Triad: 3 Helios's/3 Apollo's	
	FOURTH HYPERCOSMIC TRIAD			Corybantid Triad	3 Couretes	
Hypercosmic-Encosmic Souls	Hypercosmic-Encosmic Gods*	Contiguous and Separate	12 gods of <i>Phaedrus</i> myth	Separate Gods Four triads <i>demiurgic</i> : Zeus, Poseidon, Hephaestus; <i>immaculate</i> : Hestia, Athena, Ares; <i>life-giving</i> : Demeter, Hera, Artemis; <i>elevating</i> : Hermes, Aphrodite, Apollo	Separate Gods Four triads <i>demiurgic</i> : Zeus, Poseidon, Hephaestus; <i>immaculate</i> : Hestia, Athena, Ares; <i>life-giving</i> : Demeter, Hera, Artemis; <i>elevating</i> : Hermes, Aphrodite, Apollo	The first triad belongs to the first demiurgy but forms the transition to the encosmic triad

Encosmic Souls	Encosmic Gods* non-wandering gods: fixed stars wanderings gods: planets + 9 sublunary gods	Equal and Unequal	young gods ( <i>Tim.</i> 40e5-41a3)		The encosmic gods Dionysus: as the circle of the Same Dionysus torn to pieces by the Titans: as the circle of the Different + other gods	2nd (partial) demiurgy
OTHER SOULS						
Universal Souls	World Soul and other universal souls*	Partaking in time	World Soul ( <i>Tim.</i> )	Nature** and Fatality	Gods linked to the celestial bodies	Universal/monadic, but not transcendent
Intermediate souls	Angels, Daemons, Heroes*	Partaking in the division of time	<i>Phdr.</i> myth	Higher Souls: Archangels, Angels, Daemons (good and evil), Heroes	Higher Souls	Souls that always accompany their gods
Particular souls	Human souls		<i>Phdr.</i> myth	Human Souls Rational part	Human Souls Rational part	Sometimes in company of gods or always descended; Related virtues: ethical, political, kathartic, theoretic (ascending)
NATURE						
Nature**						Universal/monadic, but not transcendent
particular maternal natures and irrational souls	irrational (parts of) human souls, animal souls					Some presided over by rational souls, some not. Related virtues: Natural

(continued)

Continued

Metaphysical Principles	Levels of divine existence	<i>Parm.</i> 2nd hypothesis	Other dialogues	Chaldaean Oracles	Orphic Rhapsodies	Remarks
BODIES						
Universal bodies	elements		four elements ( <i>Tim.</i> etc.)			
Formed matter				bodies	bodies	4th substrate
			traces of the Forms ( <i>Tim.</i> )			(3rd substrate)
First body			<i>Soph.</i> 248–256			2nd substrate, properties reflect <i>megista genê</i>
MATTER						
Matter			<i>chôra</i> ( <i>Tim.</i> ), <i>Parm.</i> 159b2–160b4 (5th hypothesis)	matter	matter	1st or ultimate substrate

\* We mention only the first Henad and its power separately. The other Henads are marked with an asterisk.

\*\* Contributors disagree on whether Nature is a hypostasis or merely the lower part of the World Soul. On the controversy concerning the status of Nature, see Martijn (2010a) and Lernould (2012).

## APPENDIX II

### Proclus' Works

This appendix provides a short survey of Proclus' extant works, supplemented with some indications concerning works that are entirely or for the most part lost, and concerning spurious and inauthentic works. For a thorough assessment of the evidence about the lost and spurious works, we refer the reader to Luna and Segonds (2012), to which the present survey is much indebted. For the extant works, we also mention the main editions currently available, as well as a selection of recent translations into English and other modern languages.<sup>1</sup> The editions of Proclus' texts used as standard editions in this volume are indicated with an asterisk (\*).

#### Proclus' Biography

Although not a work by Proclus himself, the biography that his pupil Marinus wrote in honour of Proclus<sup>2</sup> is required reading for anyone interested in the impression that Proclus' personality must have made on his contemporaries and in life at the fifth-century Platonic school of Athens. The standard edition of the text (with extensive notes and a French translation) is:

\**Marinus: Proclus ou Sur le bonheur*, ed. and tr. H. D. Saffrey and A.-Ph. Segonds, with the assistance of C. Luna (Collection des universités de France), Paris: Les Belles Lettres, 2001.

The most recent and most reliable English translation is to be found in:

M. Edwards, *Neoplatonic Saints: The Lives of Plotinus and Proclus by their Students*, Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 2000, 58–115.

#### Commentaries and other Exegetical Works

##### *On Plato*

There is evidence of Proclus' exegetical activity on all the dialogues that formed part of the traditional reading curriculum in the later Neoplatonic schools.<sup>3</sup> But it is far from certain—and in some cases rather implausible—that Proclus ever wrote full-blown commentaries on all these works. What is beyond doubt is that only a fraction of the material has survived. Apart from the extant commentaries, there is good evidence that Proclus commented on at least *Gorgias*, *Phaedo*, *Theaetetus*, and *Philebus*. Commentaries, often partial, on four canonized dialogues have been preserved, as well as a series of essays on the extra-curricular *Republic*:

##### *Commentary on the First Alcibiades*

The standard edition of the Greek text, with an extensive introduction, notes, and a French translation is:

\**Proclus: Sur le premier Alcibiade de Platon*, ed. and tr. A.-P. Segonds, 2 vols (Collection des universités de France), Paris: Les Belles Lettres, 1985–6.

An annotated English translation was published in 1964 (and reprinted in 1971) by William O'Neill:

*Proclus: Alcibiades I*, a translation and commentary by W. O'Neill, 2nd edn, The Hague: Martinus Nijhoff, 1971.

The translation has been recently made available again, together with Leendert Westerink's 1954 edition (which in many respects paved the way for Segond's edition), by the Prometheus Trust:

*Proclus' Commentary on the First Alcibiades*, ed. L. G. Westerink and tr. W. O'Neill (Platonic Texts and Translations Series), Westbury: The Prometheus Trust, 2011.

### *Commentary on the Cratylus*

The commentary, which consists of a series of *scholia* on the text, extends as far as *Crat.* 407c. The standard edition of the Greek text is:

\**Proclus Diadochus in Platonis Cratylum commentaria*, ed. G. Pasquali (Bibliotheca scriptorum Graecorum et Romanorum Teubneriana), Leipzig: Teubner, 1908; repr. Stuttgart: Teubner, 1994.

An annotated English translation, to be used with caution, is now available in the Ancient Commentators on Aristotle series:

*Proclus: On Plato Cratylus*, tr. B. Duval (Ancient Commentators on Aristotle), London: Duckworth; Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2007.

### *Commentary on the Timaeus*

This commentary, of which five books are preserved, covering the text up to *Tim.* 44d, has been edited in three volumes:<sup>4</sup>

\**Procli Diadochi In Platonis Timaeum commentaria*, ed. E. Diehl, 3 vols (Bibliotheca scriptorum Graecorum et Romanorum Teubneriana), Leipzig: Teubner, 1903–6; repr. Amsterdam: Hakkert, 1965.

A new edition of book II of the commentary is currently being prepared by a team of scholars in Leuven, under the supervision of Gerd Van Riel. Two modern translations should also be mentioned here. The first is an excellent English translation prepared by a team of Australian scholars, of which five volumes have been published so far, covering the first four books of the commentary:

*Proclus: Commentary on Plato's Timaeus*, tr. H. Tarrant, D. Baltzly, D. T. Runia, and M. Share, 5 vols Cambridge: CUP, 2007–13.

The second is an annotated French translation and a monument of Proclus scholarship:

*Commentaire sur le Timée*, tr. A.-J. Festugière, 5 vols (Bibliothèque des textes philosophiques), Paris: Vrin, 1966–8.

### *Commentary on the Parmenides*

Of Proclus' *Commentary on the Parmenides*, the dialogue that formed the culmination of the later Neoplatonic curriculum, seven books—of which the last for a substantial part survives only in the medieval Latin translation of William of Moerbeke—have been preserved, breaking off at *Parm.* 142a. Victor Cousin's 2nd edition (Paris, 1864) remained, despite its many shortcomings, the standard edition until recently. That is the reason why the page numbers of this edition are still used in the scholarly literature and in the two new editions that were published in the past decade. Since the line numbers of Cousin's edition were not preserved in the new editions, it is important to always specify which edition has been used. In this

volume, the edition by Carlos Steel, which is the only complete edition so far, was used as the text of reference:

\**Procli in Platonis Parmenidem commentaria*, ed. C. Steel, with the collaboration of C. Macé, P. d'Hoine, A. Gribomont, and L. Van Campe, 3 vols. (Oxford Classical Texts), Oxford: Clarendon, 2007–9.

A second new edition, with a French translation and extensive notes, is being prepared for the Budé series:

*Proclus. Commentaire sur le Parménide de Platon*, ed. and tr. A. P. Segonds and C. Luna, 5 vols (Collection des Universités de France), Paris: Les Belles Lettres, 2007–14.

An English translation, based on Cousin's edition, but already taking into account many corrections based on Moerbeke's Latin translation and conjectures (proposed by L. G. Westerink), with useful summaries of and introductions to the different books, is also available:

*Proclus' Commentary on Plato's Parmenides*, tr. G. R. Morrow and J. M. Dillon, with introduction and notes by J. M. Dillon, Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1987.

### *Commentary on the Republic*

Unlike Proclus' other commentaries, the one on the *Republic* is not a running commentary, but rather consists of a collection of seventeen essays, each dealing with either a part of the text or with a particular issue raised in it. The edition of reference is the following:

\**Procli Diadochi in Platonis rem publicam commentarii*, ed. W. Kroll, 2 vols (Bibliotheca scriptorum Graecorum et Romanorum Teubneriana), Leipzig: Teubner, 1899–1901; repr. Amsterdam: Hakkert, 1965.

The best translation currently available is the annotated French translation by A.-J. Festugière:

*Proclus: Commentaire sur la République*, tr. A.-J. Festugière, 3 vols (Bibliothèque des textes philosophiques), Paris: Vrin, 1970.

Two of the longer essays, dealing with the discussion of poetry in the *Republic*, have recently been translated into English, with useful notes:

R. Lamberton, *Proclus the Successor on Poetics and the Homeric Poems: Essays 5 and 6 of his Commentary on the Republic of Plato* (Writings from the Greco-Roman World 34), Atlanta, GA: Society of Biblical Literature, 2012.

A full English translation is currently in preparation for Cambridge University Press by D. Baltzly, J. Finamore, and G. Miles.

Apart from commentaries proper, there is evidence that Proclus also wrote texts on Plato of a more introductory character (*Prolegomena to Plato's Philosophy* and an *Outline of Platonic Philosophy*), as well as a number of shorter treatises dealing with particular issues in the *Philebus* (*On the Three Monads*—not extant) and the *Timaeus*. He must have written a treatise on the mathematical doctrines contained in the *Timaeus*, which is no longer extant, and he composed a treatise in which he defended Plato's *Timaeus* against Aristotle's criticism. The evidence for and fragments of this latter work are collected in Steel (2005b). Finally, we know that Proclus also wrote a short monograph presumably titled *On Plato's Three Proofs for the Immortality of the Soul*, which has been fragmentarily preserved in Latin and Arabic (see Westerink 1973; Hasnaoui 1997; Chemi 2014), as well as a lost treatise which



aimed to purify Plato's doctrines from alleged misconceptions by Proclus' fellow-student Domninus.

### *On Aristotle*

Of Proclus' substantial exegetical work on Aristotle virtually nothing survives. We have good evidence, however, that commentaries on *On Interpretation* and on the *Prior* and *Posterior Analytics* had been circulating under his name. The evidence is now gathered in Luna and Segonds (2012: 1556–62). It is controversial whether or not Elias' reference (*in Cat.* 107.24–6) to a 'common reading' (*sunanagnôsis*) in which Proclus proposed a set of ten preliminary points to be treated before the reading of Aristotle actually refers to a written work with that title,<sup>5</sup> but the scheme was picked up by the later commentators on Aristotle's *Categories*.

### *On Plotinus*

Some fragments of a commentary by Proclus on the *Enneads* have been preserved: see Westerink (1959).

### *On Euclid*

The standard edition of Proclus' *Commentary on the first book of Euclid's Elements* is still Friedlein's:

\**Procli Diadochi in primum Euclidis elementorum librum commentarii*, ed. G. Friedlein (Bibliotheca scriptorum Graecorum et Romanorum Teubneriana), Leipzig: Teubner, 1873; repr. Hildesheim: Olms, 1967.

An English translation of this commentary, to be used with caution, is also available:

*A Commentary on the First Book of Euclid's Elements*, tr. G. R. Morrow, Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1970; repr. 1992, with a foreword by I. Mueller.

A new critical edition of the text, to be accompanied by a new French translation by A. Lernoùd, is currently being prepared by C. Steel and G. Van Riel, while M. Martijn and O. Harari are preparing a new English translation of the prologues for the Ancient Commentators on Aristotle series.

There is no compelling reason to believe that Proclus also authored a commentary on Nicomachus' *Introduction to Arithmetics*, as has been conjectured in the past (see Luna and Segonds 2012: 1641–2).

### *On Theological Authorities*

#### *On the Chaldaean Oracles*

Proclus' extant works are a major source for the *Chaldaean Oracles*, which only partially survive in quotations by later authors. Proclus even composed a commentary on the *Oracles*, of which some excerpts are preserved, which we probably owe to Michael Psellus (eleventh century). Édouard des Places has included these excerpts in his edition and French translation of the *Oracles*:

\**Oracles chaldaïques*, ed. É. des Places, Paris: Les Belles Lettres, 1971.

The *Oracles* are also available in an English translation, accompanied by the Greek text of des Places' edition and a commentary by Ruth Majercik:

*The Chaldean Oracles*, text, tr. and comm. by R. Majercik (Studies in Greek and Roman Religion 5), Leiden: Brill, 1989.

The excerpts from Proclus' commentary, by contrast, have been rendered into English in the following inspired translation:

*Iamblichus. The Exhortation to Philosophy. Including the Letters of Iamblichus and Proclus' Commentary on the Chaldean Oracles*, tr. T. M. Johnson, ed. S. Neuville, with a foreword by J. Godwin, Grand Rapids, MI: Phanes, 1988.

#### *On Hesiod*

The remaining fragments of Proclus' *Commentary on Hesiod's Works and Days* are now available in a new edition with a German translation and comments:

P. Marzillo, *Der Kommentar des Proklos zu Hesiods 'Werken und Tagen', Edition, Übersetzung und Erläuterung der Fragmente* (Classica Monacensia 33), Tübingen: Narr, 2010.

In the list of Proclus' works transmitted in the medieval lexicon Suda (II 2473) two works on Orphism are attributed to Proclus as well: a work *On the Theology of Orpheus* and another one titled *On the Harmony of Orpheus, Pythagoras and Plato with the Oracles*. If the first is to be identified with the work that Marinus alludes to in his *Life of Proclus* (§ 27), it must have consisted of a commentary by Syrianus on the *Orphic Poems*, to which marginal notes were added by Proclus. The second title also figures in the list of Syrianus' writings mentioned by the Suda, which is the reason why its authorship has been called into doubt. Neither of these works, however, is extant.

The Suda also mentions a commentary by Proclus on Homer, as well as a work devoted to the *Gods of Homer*. The authorship of these lost works is equally controversial, since the lexicon attributes the same titles also to Syrianus. Finally, the fragments preserved in Arabic of a commentary on the Pythagorean *Golden Verses* (see Linley 1984) are probably not by our Proclus.

## Systematic Works

### *Philosophical Treatises*

#### *Platonic Theology*

The magnificent edition of Proclus' *magnum opus*, the *Platonic Theology*, by Saffrey and Westerink in the last decades of the previous century has greatly contributed to the recent revival of Proclean studies and remains one of the great editorial achievements in recent scholarship on Proclus:

\**Proclus: Théologie platonicienne*, ed. and tr. H. D. Saffrey and L. G. Westerink, 6 vols (Collection des universités de France), Paris: Les Belles Lettres, 1968–97.

The edition also contains a French translation and abundant notes on the text. Since Thomas Taylor's translation in 1816 the work has not been translated into English in its entirety. Several Italian translations are available, however, of which we will here mention only the most recent one:

*Proclo: Teologia Platonica*, tr. M. Casaglia and A. Linguisti, Turin: UTET, 2007.

#### *Elements of Theology*

For Proclus' *Elements of Theology*, the pioneering edition of Dodds, with an excellent English translation and extremely rich notes, remains, after more than eighty years, a masterpiece of scholarship:

\**The Elements of Theology*, ed. and tr. E. R. Dodds, Oxford: Clarendon, 1963; 1st edn 1933.

The same work has often, and with varying degrees of success, been translated into modern languages. For a recent annotated German translation with Greek text, see:

*Proklos: Theologische Grundlegung, Griechisch-Deutsch*, ed. E.-O. Onnasch and B. Schomakers (Philosophische Bibliothek 562), Leipzig: Meiner Verlag, 2015.

A new annotated French translation is currently being prepared by a team of French-speaking scholars directed by L. Brisson, P. Hoffmann, G. Aubry, and L. Lavaud.

### *Tria Opuscula*

The three short treatises that Proclus wrote on the problems of evil, fate, and providence, are, apart from some Byzantine paraphrases, only preserved in the medieval Latin word-by-word translations by William of Moerbeke. The standard edition of the Latin text, with the surviving Greek fragments, is Boese's:

\**Procli Diadochi tria opuscula (De providentia, libertate, malo) Latine Guilelmo de Moerbeka vertente et Graece ex Isaacii Sebastocratoris aliorumque scriptis collecta*, ed. H. Boese (Quellen und Studien zur Geschichte der Philosophie 1), Berlin: de Gruyter, 1960.

A tentative reconstruction of the entire Greek text has recently been made by Benedikt Strobel, on the basis of a retroversion from the Latin translation:

B. Strobel, *Proklos. Tria opuscula. Textkritisch kommentierte Retroversion der Übersetzung Wilhelms von Moerbeke* (Commentaria in Aristotelem Graeca et Byzantina 6), Berlin: W. de Gruyter, 2014.

The three works have each been separately translated for the Ancient Commentaries on Aristotle series, with extensive introductions and notes:

*Proclus: Ten Problems Concerning Providence*, tr. J. Opsomer and C. Steel (Ancient Commentators on Aristotle), London: Bristol Classical Press, 2012.

*Proclus: On Providence*, tr. C. Steel (Ancient Commentators on Aristotle), London: Duckworth; Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2007.

*Proclus: On the Existence of Evils*, tr. J. Opsomer and C. Steel (Ancient Commentators on Aristotle), London: Duckworth; Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2003.

### *Scientific and Mathematical Treatises*

#### *Elements of Physics*

The *Elements of Physics*, in which Proclus summarizes Aristotle's theory of motion as presented in *Physics* VI and VIII and *On the Heavens* I, have been edited and translated into German by Ritzenfeld:

\**Procli Diadochi Lycii institutio physica*, ed. and tr. A. Ritzenfeld (Bibliotheca scriptorum Graecorum et Romanorum Teubneriana), Leipzig: Teubner, 1912.

The work, which has received relatively little attention in recent scholarship, is not available in English, but an annotated translation is planned by Jan Opsomer and Christoph Helmig.

#### *Outline of Astronomical Hypotheses*

Proclus' *Outline of Astronomical Hypotheses* is not a particularly vexed text today, but it is the only genuine work on astronomy transmitted to us under the name of Proclus.<sup>6</sup> No translation into any modern language is known to us, but the standard edition of the Greek text is Manutius':

\**Procli Diadochi hypotyposis astronomicarum positionum*, ed. C. Manutius (Bibliotheca scriptorum Graecorum et Romanorum Teubneriana), Leipzig: Teubner, 1909; repr. Stuttgart: Teubner, 1974.

### *On the Eternity of the World*

Apart from the first argument, which only survives in Arabic, the eighteen arguments that Proclus proposed in defence of the eternity of the world, in a treatise devoted specifically to that topic, are transmitted in the extensive refutation that the Christian John Philoponus wrote against them. The standard edition of Philoponus' refutation is Rabe's:

\**Ioannes Philoponus, De aeternitate mundi contra Proclum*, ed. H. Rabe (Bibliotheca scriptorum Graecorum et Romanorum Teubneriana), Leipzig: Teubner, 1899; repr. Hildesheim: Olms, 1963.

An English translation of this anti-Proclean treatise has been published in four volumes in the Ancient Commentators on Aristotle series by Michael Share (arguments 1–11, with the help of Peter Adamson for the first Proclean argument) and James Wilberding (for arguments 12–18):

*Philoponus, Against Proclus On the Eternity of the World*, tr. M. Share and J. Wilberding, 4 vols (Ancient Commentators on Aristotle), London: Duckworth; Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2005–10.

A separate edition of Proclus' arguments, with a revised text, an English translation (including the first argument, translated from the Arabic), and a full commentary, is now also available:

*Proclus, On the Eternity of the world (de Aeternitate mundi)*, Greek text with introduction, tr. and comm. by H. S. Lang and A. D. Macro, argument I tr. from the Arabic by J. McGinnis, Berkeley-Los Angeles: University of California Press, 2001.

Mention should also be made of the German translation included in Matthias Baltes' comprehensive monograph on the topic:

M. Baltes, *Die Weltenstehung des platonischen Timaios nach den antiken Interpretationen*, II. *Proklos* (Philosophia antiqua 35), Leiden: Brill, 1978.

We know that Proclus also wrote a treatise *On Place*. This work does not survive, but it is possible that the passages that Simplicius, in a digression of his commentary on Aristotle's *Physics* known as the *Corrollary on Place*, quotes as evidence of Proclus' views on place as an immaterial body (to be identified with light), derive from this work. A *Letter to Aristocles*, in which Proclus discussed some aspects of Chaldaean cosmology, is also lost.

### *Works on Theology and Theurgy*

We probably owe to Michael Psellus a short compilation of excerpts from a work titled *On the Hieratic Art* (*De arte hieratica*), also known by the title of the Latin translation of Ficino, *On Sacrifice and Magic* (*De sacrificio et magia*) (see Bidez 1936: 86). The Greek text of this work on theurgy was edited for the first time by Bidez:

\*J. Bidez (ed.), *Catalogue des manuscrits alchimiques grecs*, VI. *Michel Psellus, Épitre sur la Chrysopée*. En appendice Proclus, *Sur l'art hiératique*; Psellus, *Choix de dissertations inédites*, Brussels: Lamertin, 1928, 148–51.

A French translation, with some notes, is provided by Festugière in his *magnum opus* on the Hermetic tradition:

A.-J. Festugière (tr.), *La révélation d'Hermès Trismégiste*, I. *L'astrologie et les sciences occultes*, Paris: Librairie Lecoffre, 1944, 134–6; repr. Paris: Les Belles Lettres, 1989.

A new critical edition, with English translation and comments, is being prepared by Eleni Pachoumi.

Of three other Proclean works mentioned by our ancient sources, *On Mythical Symbols*, *On the Mother of the Gods* (i.e. Cybele), and *On Elevation*, hardly anything is preserved.

### *Literary Criticism*

Both the literary manual called *Chrestomathia*, and a work that circulates under the name *Epistolary Styles* (*epistolimaioi charaktères*), which is a collection of letter 'templates', have at some point in the tradition been attributed to (a certain) Proclus, but it is unlikely that *our* Proclus authored either of them.

### Poetry

The surviving hymns and epigrams of Proclus have been edited by Ernst Vogt:

*\*Procli hymni accedunt hymnorum fragmenta; epigrammata, scholia, fontium et locorum similium apparatus, indices*, ed. E. Vogt, Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz, 1957.

An English translation of the hymns is available in Van den Berg's comprehensive study, which also renders the Greek text:

R. M. van den Berg, *Proclus' Hymns: Essays, Translations, Commentary* (*Philosophia antiqua* 90), Leiden: Brill, 2001.

An English translation of one of Proclus' epigrams, more precisely his own epitaph, may be found in Edwards, as it is quoted by Marinus in *V. Proc.* § 36.

M. Edwards, *Neoplatonic Saints: The Lives of Plotinus and Proclus by their Students*, Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 2000, 113.

### NOTES

1. This survey is by no means exhaustive and only aims to be a working instrument for the novice reader of Proclus. For this reason, only the standard editions of Proclus' works—usually but not always the most recent editions—are mentioned here. The same goes for translations of Proclus. Many of Proclus' works were translated into English in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries by Thomas Taylor—translations which are now made available again by the Prometheus Trust. Notwithstanding their great merits, new critical editions of Proclus' works and some peculiarities of Taylor's style and language have rendered these translations obsolete as useful pathways to Proclus for English readers. As a rule we list the most recent English translations available, while we are much more selective for translations into other modern languages, which we only mention when either English translations are lacking or when these other translations provide, in our appreciation, obvious advantages or useful supplements to the available English

translations. This choice springs above all from pragmatic considerations and implies no judgement whatsoever on the merits of other available translations. For a more comprehensive survey of available editions and translations of Proclus' works, we refer the reader to the website of the De Wulf-Mansion Centre in Leuven: <<https://hiw.kuleuven.be/dwmc/ancientphilosophy/proclus/proclused.html#top>>.

2. On this biography, see especially Ch. 1 in this volume.
3. On this curriculum, see Ch. 2 in this volume.
4. In the references to this commentary in this volume, roman numbers refer to the volumes of Diehl's edition—as is common practice—and not to the books of Proclus' commentary.
5. For a recent challenge to this traditional view, see Luna and Segonds (2012: 1555–6).
6. Three other works on related topics have at some point in their textual history been attributed to Proclus, but the *communis opinio* is that none of them is authentic: a commentary on Ptolemy's *Tetrabiblion*, a *Paraphrase* of the same work, and a treatise called *On the Sphere*.



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This bibliography contains editions, translations and studies that are either referred to in this volume or provide background to specific chapters. More complete bibliographies for Proclus are Scotti Muth (1993), for studies published before 1993, and d'Hoine, Helmig, Macé, and Van Campe (2005), which is a nearly exhaustive bibliography for the fifteen years covered. More recent studies are gathered on the website of the De Wulf-Mansion Centre for Ancient, Medieval and Renaissance Philosophy at KU Leuven and can be accessed through the following link: <<https://hiw.kuleuven.be/dwmc/ancientphilosophy/proclus/proclusbiblio.html>>.

An overview of the standard editions and translations of Proclus' works can be found in Appendix II. From the index of passages the reader can learn which editions were used for the references to late ancient texts in this volume and to texts for which there is more than one standard edition. In both cases, the edition in question is also included in this bibliography, under the editor's last name.

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